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THE FOURTH MUSKETEER

THE FOURTH MUSKETEER

THE LIFE OF ALEXANDER DUMAS

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

J. LUCAS-DUBRETON

BY MAIDA CASTELHUN DARNTON

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FIT

TO MY FRIEND CLERGEAU

CAPTAIN OF A SHIP

WHO, DURING HIS CRUISES IN THE PACIFIC,
LEARNED "THE THREE MUSKETEERS" BY HEART.

J. L.-D.

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FOREWORD

Michelet wrote to the elder Dumas: "Monsieur, I love you and I admire you because you are one of the forces of nature."

He used the right phrase. The ideology, the social themes, and the ethical problems dear to the younger Dumas play no part in his father's life. That life expresses itself solely on the plane of action and of instinct—hence its characteristic violence of tone, boldness of gesture, serene assurance, and innocent gaiety.

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THE FOURTH MUSKETEER

CHAPTER I

THE BABE IN THE WOODS

Polyxène Davy de la Pailleterie, wife of the Chevalier de Salmon, lord of La Brosse, was on bad terms with her husband and at his instigation was shut up in 1703 in the Convent of the Madeleine at La Flèche. But on the death of the lord of La Brosse, she immediately made her escape and went away to live in Paris. After eleven years' imprisonment she meant to enjoy her freedom.

She enjoyed it thoroughly, but not after the manner of a person of rank, and she behaved so recklessly that, when she had spent her last *sou* she was stranded in a furnished room "next door to an old woman of very bad repute."

The father of Polyxène who owned a manor in Normandy and prided himself on belonging to a noble family—a Davy had been the king's ambassador to Switzerland in the sixteenth century—could not put up with his daughter's ways and ordered her back to the convent; but Polyxène was in no mood to return. She preferred the freedom of her furnished room to a pious

cell, no matter how arranged for the use of great ladies. To make her listen to reason her father asked for a "lettre de cachet" from the Regent, the way of that time for hushing up the scandals in the families of the great. On December 12, 1716, the impetuous Polyxène was led back, under custody, to the Convent of la Flèche. What became of her afterwards no one knows. But the fact worth noting is that this father who had his daughter imprisoned was without doubt the great-great-grandfather of the author of *The Three Musketeers*.

In 1760 another Davy de la Pailleterie, the eccentric Alexandre-Antoine, former gentleman of the Prince of Conti and Commissary General of Artillery, led by love of adventure, set sail for San Domingo and settled on the western point of the island at a place called "Jeremy's Gap." There he lived like a potentate surrounded by black slaves; and in 1762 he had, by one of these, Louise-Césette Dumas, a son to whom he gave the name Thomas-Alexander. Later he grew homesick; he wanted to behold his Normandy once more and the family manor with its four towers surmounted by spikes. In 1780 he returned to France, taking with him the little mulatto, born of his love affair with Louise-Césette.

The little mulatto dreamed only of the hunt and battles, and his visit to Normandy pleased him so little

that he said to his father: "I want to go away and be a soldier." Indifferent, perhaps, Alexandre-Antoine did not oppose him; but, being an aristocrat, he gave his consent on one condition only: Thomas-Alexander should not enlist under the noble name of Davy de la Pailleterie, but under that of his mother, the black slave of "Jeremy's Gap." . . . As Thomas-Alexander Dumas he was signed on as a soldier in the army of France.

There he made his way in the grand manner, for he was audacious and those were troublous times. In 1793, seven years after his enlistment, he was general of a division. He fought in the Pyrenees and in the Alps; he took seventeen hundred prisoners at Mont-Cenis which he occupied in spite of snow and the superior numbers of the enemy; he passed over into Switzerland and, quite alone, defended the Bridge of Clausen against the Austrians, which feat won him the title, Horatius Cocles of the Tyrol. He was popular in the army and rightly so. This colossus of five feet ten inches, with dark skin, soft, chestnut-colored eyes, white teeth, and hands and feet whose womanly delicacy revealed his aristocratic origin, always marched in the front rank and threw himself personally into every struggle.

One day he returned to camp, clean forespent. "Are you wounded, General?" asked Dermoncourt, his aide-de-camp.

"No, but I have killed so many, I have killed so many . . ." and he fainted dead away.

Yet this killer was a kind fellow. Once, in the village of Saint-Maurice, he destroyed the guillotine at the moment when they were about to execute four poor devils accused of trying to drag away the bells of their church to melt them. Collot d'Herbois summoned him to justify himself before the Convention. But politicians, even the Terrorists, held no terror for him; and after he had got rid of them, he went back to play again cheerfully, joyfully, with all his might. You could have seen him lift four gun-barrels, not with outstretched arm, but with outstretched finger, or catch hold of a beam with his delicate womanly hands and raise his horse between his legs. His skill with pistol and with rifle was astounding, and people marveled at this gaucho, this cowboy, this laughing giant. And yet this Horatius Cocles of the Tyrol, Black Devil and bugbear of the Austrians, was really the best fellow in the world. General Thiébault, who disliked mulattoes, declared: "He is the only colored man whom I have forgiven his skin."

But Thomas-Alexander was not content with being brave, skillful, and strong; he was shrewd as well. During the Italian campaign an Austrian spy who had just been taken prisoner was brought before him. The man was searched, but nothing was found on him. "Give him

a purge!" ordered Thomas-Alexander; and soon after an aide-de-camp brought him a little wax ball enclosing a letter. This was sent to the General-in-Chief Bonaparte who summoned Berthier.

The letter proved to be important and the reputation of Thomas-Alexander grew at a leap. He followed Bonaparte to Egypt and, for a good beginning, drove the Mamelukes into the Nile; "and that," he modestly added, "is called, I believe, the Battle of the Pyramids." Just as he had been a terror to the Austrians, he now terrified the Egyptians. In the thick of battle he was everywhere. When he appeared in the cemetery at Cairo, whirling his flashing saber above his head while his horse pranced and reared and crashed its forehoofs down on the gravestones, the natives, at sight of this demigod with face scorched by the sun of Egypt, fled in panic crying, "The Angel! The Angel!"

The Angel, or the Black Devil, saw before him a brilliant future. He was thirty-five years old and he knew that he was favorably noted by Bonaparte; but he had won his stripes under the Revolution, he was firmly republican, and when he discerned in the General-in-Chief the way of a dictator, he plotted against him. Diplomacy was not his strong point and he had a bitter experience—the plot was discovered, and Thomas-Alexander was forced to embark forthwith for France.

And now his misfortunes began. The ship in which

he sailed was seized by the enemy and conducted to Tarentum. Thomas-Alexander was imprisoned, kept in close confinement, and treated with special severity. It seemed as though the jailers had some private grudge against their prisoner and had received orders to rid themselves of him; two several attempts were made to poison him. At the end of twenty months he regained his freedom, but in what wretched shape! Lame, deaf in one ear, almost blind, partially paralyzed, and suffering frightfully from stomach trouble, he who had been the brilliant general of the Army of the Alps, of Italy, and of Egypt, found himself stranded in Villers-Cotterets.

It was at Villers-Cotterets that he had married in 1792, between campaigns, Marie-Louise-Elizabeth Labouret, daughter of Sieur Labouret, landlord of the Hotel of the Crown and Commandant of the National Guard.

For a soldier of fortune who had roamed the world and suffered much and who now came back to the fold, broken in health and penniless, Villers-Cotterets should have been a delightful haven. The forest is crossed by noble avenues; woods frame the meadows; the sky is mild, yet not too soft; and there is something soothing and harmonious in the landscape of Villers-Cotterets. The dominant note is a château of the Renaissance

which, though fallen to the low estate of a place of confinement for vagrants, still reared its lofty chimneys, marked with the fleur-de-lys or symbolical salamander, above the little town. Past magnificence has left its ghostly shadows and the essential character of the country has not altogether disappeared even before the march of an industrial age. Even the games preserve a certain ancient and lordly flavor. Villers-Cotterets takes pride in a company of archers.

In his house in the rue de Lormet—the simple house of a humble citizen, with only one story and a yard—Thomas-Alexander tasted without relish the charms of provincial peace. He suffered from inaction and from physical weakness; and his daughter, Alexandrine-Aimée, born in 1793, was not enough to divert him. When a man has marched over the roads of Europe and even reached Africa, when his friends and comrades are still fighting and building epic history, how can a man be content at Villers-Cotterets?

He was very poor. All his attempts to collect his arrear-pay were in vain. When some one mentioned his name to Bonaparte, "I forbid you ever to speak to me of that man again," was the reply.

There was no appeal against this judgment, and the servant's rancor matched that of the master. Thomas-Alexander, recalling a day when Bonaparte had embraced him, after some splendid deed, muttered, "When

I think that I had him between my arms and could have strangled him!" After a while he grew resigned and, established as a citizen of Villers-Cotterets in spite of himself, he puttered about, a superannuated soldier.

Now, in 1802, on July 24—the fifth of Thermidor in the tenth year of the Republic as the General, who grew more and more republican, preferred to say—at half past five in the morning Madame Dumas gave birth to a son, who, in accordance with family tradition, was called Alexander. Great was everyone's joy, for up to that time the household had only a daughter.[1]

"I have to announce to you," General Dumas wrote to his friend, General Brune, "that my wife yesterday was delivered of a son who weighs nine pounds and measures eighteen inches. If he continues to grow outside as he has grown inside, he bids fair to attain a very fine figure."

Would Brune become the godfather of this prodigy? But Brune refused. He had been godfather five times, his five godchildren were all dead, and he was afraid of bringing bad luck to young Alexander. So the boy entered upon life without this lofty sponsorship. Perhaps this was an advantage . . .

Madame Dumas looked at her son with rapture; she had been very afraid that he might be quite black! A

[1] This sister of Dumas, who later became Madame Letellier, played no part in her brother's life.

few days before the 24th of July she had seen a marionette show where Polichinelle was carried off by a black devil named Berlick. This Berlick had frightened her and she had gone home in a fit of nerves: "I'll be ruined! I shall give birth to a Berlick!" But far from it; Alexander had a fair skin, light hair, and blue eyes; he was not at all diabolical and he flourished on the admiration of his gigantic father, "the calf of whose leg was as big round as the waist of his mother."

But the giant was falling into a decline; the stomach trouble from which he had suffered since his imprisonment at Tarentum became more violent. In 1806 he died. Alexander was in despair. He could not conceive that a man so big, so good, and so strong could disappear in this way; and when he was told that his father had been taken away by God, he wanted to go to Heaven to search for God up there and demand satisfaction of him.

Madame Dumas, poorer than ever by the death of her husband, now lived with her parents in the Hotel of the Crown. She could not dream of procuring a scholarship for her son from the Emperor and so entrusted him to a good priest, the Abbé Grégoire, who was to teach him his rudiments. But Alexander leaned not at all toward letters and even less toward mathematics; he never got beyond the multiplication tables. His mother then thought of having him learn the vio-

lin and put him in the hands of an old musician of Villers-Cotterets, father Hiraux, a man a little like Hoffmann, long and thin, with a black silk cap which he pulled over his ears whenever his pupils played the wrong note. He drew down his little black cap very often when Alexander scraped away on the violin. At the end of three years Madame Dumas was informed that to try any longer to make a musician of her son would be to rob her. Alexander, said the report, couldn't so much as tune his instrument!

For what would the lad be good, then? The widow was in despair. Happily his writing master, M. Oblet, boasted of his pupil's attainments. Alexander formed every line and curve of the five kinds of writing with clearness and elegance. "But every idiot can write well," said his mother and she continued to be uneasy.

Young Alexander, for his part, remained serene; he was quite pleased with himself. Happening to cry one day, he was asked what the matter was and answered: "Dumas is crying because Dumas is troubled." Center of his little universe, Dumas knew what he was worth; Dumas would make his way; why should his mother be concerned about him?

Certainly he was ill at ease on a school bench or before a desk. He wasted no time in dreaming; but out of doors he expanded mightily. To start at daybreak to catch birds in the woods, with the poacher Hanni-

quet, nicknamed Quiot-Biche, or his friend Boudoux, who ate everything and at all times; to prepare lime-twigs, imitate the jay, and return with a string of birds; to go hunting with his mother's kinsman, M. Deviolaine, inspector of the forests; or to spend the day at the château of Villers-Hélon with M. Collard—how delightful and satisfying were these ways of spending his time and of enjoying life!

When the weather was bad Alexander had other amusements. At the lock-up for vagrants, he looked up the old fencing master, father Mounier, who stammered frightfully because of a wound in the mouth, but who could teach fencing according to the very best methods. Young Alexander pressed forward with the free gait of a colt that has been given its head.

Sometimes his mother took him with her to pay visits. He wore his company jacket of printed calico, and he harangued the grown people with complete assurance although he was no higher than a Hessian boot. People amused him, they never frightened him. One evening, at the Collards he saw an old lady, dressed in black, breathless, terrified, and with disheveled hair, sweeping in like a storm—a witch coming from the Witches' Sabbath. It was Madame de Genlis, a relative of the Collards. Her coachman had let her get lost in the forest and she was afraid of ghosts. To the urchin Alexander the old lady only seemed very funny.

He was now more than ten years old and his mother, whose only livelihood was her tobacco shop, decided to send her son to the clerical seminary. At first Alexander made no objection; but when one of his Deviolaine cousins assured him ironically that she would later take him as her father-confessor, he ran away from home and for three days lived in the woods, hunting birds with his friend, Boudoux the insatiable. And so ended all talk of the priesthood.

1814.—Villers-Cotterets lies on the road of the invader. There you get the smell of war, there you encounter the Cossack, and schools and school boys are thrown into the background. The Bourbons return, but for a short time only. In June, 1815, Alexander sees in the main street of the town a carriage driving by full tilt, and through the curtain the profile of a man. It is the Emperor about to take command of the army. Several days later he sees him again, dejected, crushed, but still swept full speed along the highway. These two visions that flash by like lightning remain fixed in his memory forever.

Madame Dumas, practical woman, tried to profit by these events. With the Bourbons reëstablished on the throne and her husband's enemy finally vanquished, she gave her son the choice between calling himself

Davy de la Pailleterie and finding a position with the royal family, or calling himself Dumas like his father, the republican, and having no prospects at all. Alexander did not hesitate; he would have no other name than his father's. Very well, but meanwhile he must live; and this friend of Boudoux, this pupil of father Mounier had as his sole capital his beautiful handwriting. What to do with that? Copy, engross . . . and so, at fifteen, Alexander went into the office of Mâitre Mennesson, the notary, as his third clerk.

The smell of dust and ink and paste did not suit him at all; and inactivity got on his nerves. At the end of half an hour, his legs, his very long legs—for he had suddenly shot up and become thin as a lathe—itched and he took every chance to sneak off, to look up the poacher Quiot-Biche, or the foresters who loved him in memory of his father. But these were only snatches of freedom; always he had to return to the office and scratch away at his papers along with the other clerks. It was here, however, at Mâitre Mennesson's, a liberal in politics, that Alexander improved, if one can call it so, his mind; he set to work to read the writers dear to the adversaries of the Restoration: Voltaire, Pigault-Lebrun, Legouvé, Demoustiers (a celebrity of Villers-Cotterets), Louvet de Couvray, and the *minor* poets, Bertin and Parny—all huddled together. This collection was perhaps not the best for forming his taste, but the

third clerk failed to see its humor. His readings, with the exception of *Faublas,* did not inspire him with enthusiasm and he still preferred bird-catching in the forest or even an evening "in society."

He was now beginning to take an interest in his appearance and regarded it not without approval. His blond hair curled gracefully, his large blue eyes were soft, his nose was straight, his lips were strong and sensual, his teeth very white . . . and above all he had a dazzling skin! In truth, he was an attractive young man; and to prove his attractions, he undertook to seduce a young girl of the town, Adèle Dalvin. This little campaign interested him greatly, and as Adèle soon yielded, life appeared in rainbow colors to the triumphant Alexander. He sought to acquire the elegances and even tried within his feeble means to become a provincial dandy. At night, like a new Faublas, he scaled the window to his lady fair.

Who can tell? Perhaps he might have made his way in the practice of the law, perhaps he could have become the lion of Villers-Cotterets, terror of mothers and darling of daughters. He was promoted to be second clerk with Mâitre Lefèvre at Crépy-en-Valois. His career promised to be peaceful. . . . But the uproar of Paris echoes even to the provinces, and suddenly to Alexander everything looked different.

The person who disclosed to him the marvels of the capital and brought with him the air of the great world was a young man of fashion named Adolphe de Leuven, descended from a Swedish nobleman who had taken part in the assassination of King Gustav IV and then retired to France. Adolphe sometimes came to the environs of Villers-Cotterets to rest from the fatigues of his Parisian life. Always dressed to kill, with the easy manners of a *grand seigneur,* he won immediately the heart of Alexander who listened to him, open-mouthed, as he told of theaters, actors, Mlle. Mars, Talma—Adolphe knew them and could visit their dressing-rooms—of fashionable authors, cafés, boulevards, especially the Boulevard de Gand where all the celebrities met nightly. Like a kaleidoscope full of color and charm, the delights of the world passed before the eyes of Boudoux's friend. Beside such wonders, what signified the office of Mâitre Lèfevre, the shelter for vagrants, and shabby little provincial parties? Beside the beautiful ladies whom Adolphe visited, what figure could be cut by Adèle Dalvin? Alexander's imagination magnified and exalted things and people alike; he dreamed of glory and of orgies; he forgot the forest and bird-catching. . . . He would visit Paris; from now on he was firmly set on this, and Adolphe offered to act as his guide.

There was the question of money. An insignificant trouble! He took his gun, plunged into the forest and

brought back some game which he sold to an innkeeper. Next you see him, one morning in November, 1822, on his way to Paris with a few francs in his pockets. Hours of joy, hours of impatience, the discovery of a world were before him.

Next day, in Adolphe's company, he danced attendance at the Théâtre-Français. Talma! He was to be presented to Talma who was playing the rôle of Sulla that evening. It wasn't easy to push his way through to the great man. Alexander made himself very small and slipped through the crowd, while Adolphe named the various celebrities whom they jostled. Here were Soumet, Guiraud, Etienne, and there Casimir Delavigne, pale and wretched . . . . With his big blue eyes, still very innocent, Alexander stared at these leaders in the arts.

Suddenly a voice is heard: "Make way for Mlle. Mars!"

There is a rustling of satin, an exquisite perfume, a cloud of gauze, from which flash sparkling eyes, and teeth white as pearls. Then he hears "a voice sweet as the strings of a lyre." *She* enters, and goes out again a few moments later; again there is the same rustling and that seductive perfume! In the wake of this divinity Alexander feels stunned, overwhelmed. . . .

At last he is received in the dressing room of the Master; but where he expected an imposing Sulla,

crowned with laurels, he sees only a little old man in a flannel dressing gown, as hairless as a billiard ball. His embarrassment grows when Talma asks him what he is doing.

"I'm a notary's clerk," murmurs Alexander.

"Bah!" says Talma, "Corneille was an attorney's clerk."

At that Alexander regains his assurance: "Touch my forehead. That will bring me good luck," he begs.

"Very well, so be it! Alexander Dumas, I baptize thee poet, in the name of Shakespeare, Corneille, and Schiller."

Shakespeare, Corneille, Schiller—these names had not yet made a very profound impression on the mind of the neophyte. He knew the first only through the staid translation of Ducis, a Shakespeare much sobered and polished. But the future would be his. He had been consecrated a poet and by Talma, the first tragic actor of the age—what a date in his life! Now his choice was made; he would be a writer, a dramatist, perhaps, like those gentlemen he had passed in the antechamber who, after all, did not look much cleverer than other people. When he had to go back to Villers-Cotterets—his purse was empty and his absence had made trouble at the office—he said to Adolphe de Leuven with a solemn air, "Have no fear, I shall come to Paris, I promise you."

Mâitre Lefèvre received his second clerk without

scolding, but remarked with irony that if a machine is to work all the wheels must function together. Alexander made no reply. He had to write in order to live. But while he was covering legal documents with beautiful penmanship, his mind was elsewhere, no longer in the forest with Quiot-Biche, no longer, alas! in Adèle Dalvin's cottage, but in a dressing-room at the Théâtre-Français.

Adolphe-Mephistopheles continued to teach and to spur him on. They would collaborate, they would "divert a branch of the river Pactolus which watered the grounds of M. Scribe," they would become rich and celebrated. What a happy future! As soon as he had closed the door of the office behind him, Alexander looked up his books, seeking subjects to write about and instinctively turning the novels which he read into plays. He made a melodrama from *Ivanhoe;* and on the day when he discovered the ballad of *Lenore,* by Bürger, he was dazzled indeed. This was something different from the verses of Ducis! This was moving, terrifying, fantastic, and froze the very marrow! Thanks to his fiery imagination and to his unspoiled freshness of mind, thanks also to a complete lack of the critical spirit, every new discovery echoed in him with peculiar intensity. But how could a man develop his gifts in a mediocre little town? Paris, he must have Paris.

How was he to bring this about? His departure was

effected in the simplest possible way. Among his numerous talents Alexander was a superior billiard player. One evening he won at the inn-keeper's the price of six hundred small glasses of absinthe, about ninety francs. It was a fortune, enough to pay for the coach to Paris and even to live there while finding his way about. The chance was too good to miss.

Alexander shook the dust of Mâitre Lefèvre's office from his shoes, kissed his mother whom he left lamenting, and set out for the conquest of the capital.

CHAPTER II

ALEXANDER'S YEARS OF APPRENTICESHIP

When d'Artagnan, who resembles Dumas like a brother, came first from Gascony to Paris, he had his letter of introduction stolen, the letter which his father had given him for M. de Tréville, Captain of the Musketers. Everybody knows this—it is history.

Alexander had better luck. One Sunday in May, 1823, when he stepped down from the carriage of "The Lightning Coach-Offices" and stood in the courtyard of the Hôtel des Fermes in the rue du Bouloi, he had in his pocket several letters to old friends of his father whose interest Madame Dumas bespoke for her prodigal son. It was the only provision for his journey which she had been able to give him.

But this viaticum did not prove of much use. General Sebastiani remained intrenched behind a regiment of secretaries who stood sentinel at his doors and made up his bodyguard; another friend was too poor to be of any help to the son of an old comrade. In despair Alexander looked up General Foy, the famous tribune.

This time fate smiled upon him. Foy, a well known

liberal, was on good terms with the Duke of Orléans, who lived at the Palais Royal and never refused anything to those of the opposition party. Alexander forthwith drew a petition and presented it to the general.

"Certainly, everything's all right!" exclaimed Foy.

"But why so?" asked Dumas.

"You write a beautiful hand."

Dumas was stunned. A beautiful hand! It was the stock phrase that greeted him everywhere, at Paris, as at Villers-Cotterets, and his mother's words came back to him: "Every idiot can write well." His self-esteem was wounded sore, but he had no right to be exacting. And so, several days later he entered the offices of the Duke of Orléans as a supernumerary clerk, at a salary of twelve hundred francs a year.

In order to live cheaply he left the hotel in the rue des Vieux-Augustins (rue Hérold) where he had stayed since his arrival and rented a little room with an alcove on the fourth floor of a house at No. 1, Carré des Italiens, facing the Opéra-Comique. It was a modest lodging, adorned with yellow wall paper at twelve *sous* a roll, and the rent was only ten francs a month. True, Alexander, in order to establish his position in the eyes of the concierge, gave him a royal gratuity of a louis. The concierge bowed to the ground and offered to look after monsieur's household. The louis was well spent.

But the respect he enjoyed at the Carré des Italiens

did not follow him to the Palais Royal. There he remained the humblest of clerks; and when he appeared in the office dressed in a long frock coat to his ankles—the fashion was for frock coats ending just above the knee—and bowed his large head so that his hair, now growing kinky, stood out like a grotesque aureole and made him look like a lotion peddler who advertises his lion-like mane, he was greeted with unkindly laughter. To buy another frock coat that was not a Villers-Cotterets model was out of the question, but he did have his hair cut. Short hair did not suit him—he looked like a skinny seal.

His life was now very much like that he had led at Mâitre Lefèvre's. Shut up from ten to five o'clock and in summer sometimes again from seven to ten o'clock in the evening on account of the "portfolio of Monseigneur," then living at Neuilly, he copied, copied . . . and the splendors of Paris hardly existed for him at all. The theater was a luxury and he saw the world of fashion dear to Adolphe de Leuven only in the evening, as he walked up from the rue Saint-Honoré to his own lodgings. His room seemed like a cell. Dumas no longer cried because Dumas had grown up, but Dumas could not put up with loneliness.

Facing his door, on the same landing, lived a young woman named Marie-Catherine Lebay, very blond, very fair, not pretty but charming. After an amicable

separation from her husband because of incompatibility, she had come from Rouen to Paris where she had opened a linen shop. Dumas often met her on the stairs. Catherine was much older than he, to be sure, but she was gay and attractive and he liked her. Why not have a common household? Catherine's lodgings consisted of two rooms. With his yellow chamber, they would have an apartment . . . and so Dumas recovered his confidence in life.

At the office, talking with one of his colleagues, Lassagne, who was a great devourer of books, Alexander had made a discovery—it was that he knew nothing. His desultory reading had simply burdened his mind; and thanks to "his education at three francs a month," as that old grumbler Deviolaine called it, he knew next to nothing about antiquity, about the history of France, and about foreign literature. His little stock of scattered facts floated in a void of ignorance. His whole education must begin anew. Bravely he started to school again, reading at the office between two copies, reading after supper, reading all night. Sometimes he went to see a friend at the hospital of la Charité, and took lessons in physics, chemistry, and physiology. He stored up what he found with untiring devotion and touching sincerity.

But this disinterested work did not increase his bud-

get, and on July 27, 1824, his situation became tragic, for on the very day when the Duke of Montpensier made his appearance in the world at the Palais Royal, a boy was born on the fourth floor of the Carré des Italiens who was registered as the son of Catherine Lebay, keeper of a linen shop, and who received the inevitable name of Alexander.

Young Dumas' responsibilities as a father were heavy and yet it was this very moment that he chose to invite his mother to come to Paris. She had long been complaining of her loneliness at Villers-Cotterets; and when her son, touched by her distress, sent for her, she sold her tobacco shop and came up at once. Alexander rented a little apartment for her at 53, Faubourg Saint-Denis, next to the Lion d'Argent, for three hundred and fifty francs. He could then draw up his balance sheet for the year—two households and four persons to keep on twelve hundred francs a year.

But Alexander was not the man to despair. Since he could not earn enough at the office to support this family, he would write for the theater, a sure highway to fortune. With Adolphe de Leuven and a gay bohemian named Rousseau, he wrote a vaudeville sketch, *La Chasse et l'Amour,* which was finally performed at the Ambigu theater and had a little success. As his share Alexander received three hundred francs and with characteristic business sense he immediately used the

money to have his volume, *Nouvelles Contemporaines,* printed. Written during his leisure hours, it was to establish his reputation. The bookseller sold four copies; and Dumas realized at last that the moment had come "to triumph or to present his throat."

Since the vaudeville had fetched so little, he must pass from the frivolous to the serious, and he set to work again. One day, at an exposition, he had noticed a bas-relief of the assassination of Monaldeschi. The name meant nothing to him but it was evidently a tragic episode; he borrowed the *Biographie Universelle* at his office and read the articles on Christine of Sweden and Monaldeschi. . . . What a wonderful story! The queen, her favorite, the betrayal, the cowardice of the victim, with Fontainebleau as the setting. He would go to Fontainebleau, he would write his drama and in verse, not in Ducis' manner, but in powerful, terrible, overwhelming lines, something like Bürger's *Lenore.* Here was where his talent lay! He felt himself incapable of tamely submitting to the rules laid down by the great masters, and with his violent temperament thought that the classic unities were merely organized suppression. And so, alone, without influence, without an eye to the world of letters, this tall starveling, hardly transplanted from the provinces, found the formula for the new era.

Christine's gestation was painful. The manuscript, concealed in a blotting-case at the Palais Royal, would come forth under the light of the lamp at the Carré des Italiens. Catherine sewed, the baby cried, and Alexander, finally impatient, seized his son by the arm and sent him flying, hit or miss, at the bed.

"I can still see myself in the air," the younger Dumas used to say years later.

Catherine lost her temper. . . . And the next day, at the dinner hour, Alexander came home with a melon to buy her forgiveness.

At the Duke of Orléans' palace they were beginning to think that "the outside work" of M. Dumas, if not actually prejudicial to his office work, was proving an annoyance, and one day Alexander was summoned before his chief, M. Oudard. That he should perpetrate literature was too bad, but endurable; but in any case it should be classical literature, decorous, worthy of an employee, in short, and take as its model the works of M. Casimir Delavigne. Alexander rose. He had a perfect horror of this author's works, "as breathless as the man, as consumptive as the poet." He replied squarely that he would certainly write something quite different or he would not write at all.

From that time forward it was agreed at the Palais Royal that the clerk Dumas was a revolutionist.

About this time (1827), Alexander attended a per-

formance of *Hamlet* given by an English company; and although he understood very little of what he heard, it was a revelation to him. At the point in the play within the play when the actor Kemble, in order better to see the queen's agitation, cried, "Light! Light!", Dumas almost rose himself and cried, "Light! Light!" He perceived now that he had been wandering blindly in the dark. The true Shakespeare opened his eyes for him and made him understand what a drama ought to be, composed of comedy and of tragedy, like life itself. . . . And desperately he set to work once more upon *Christine*.

Meanwhile he was writing little poems for ephemeral reviews, an elegy on the death of his benefactor, General Foy, and timidly asking newspaper editors to quote passages from it. This certainly was not fame! And though his salary had increased from twelve to fifteen hundred francs, life was still precarious. He now lived with his mother in the rue de l'Ouest. Every morning at half past nine the household cat, Mysouff, accompanied him to the rue de Vaugirard, and in the evening at half past five it waited for its master at the same corner. It was a peaceful family life, favorable for work; but there were also Catherine and the child, living at the Carré des Italiens.

Christine was finished; and there was nothing more to do but to get it produced. Where was he to turn? Alex-

ander knew no influential personages. He had made connections with some of the writers of his own age, with Méry, a jolly and highly gifted native of Marseilles, whom he had met at the Luxembourg; and Adolphe de Leuven was still well disposed toward him. But these young men trying to carve out their own ways could not support him. He needed loftier patronage.

Alexander arrived at a momentous decision. He would go to see Nodier, Nodier, the Providence of young men of letters, and ask of him an introduction to Baron Taylor, Commissary Royal of the Théâtre-Français.

The morning he rang the bell at the door of the Arsenal where Nodier was director of the Library, a young girl came to answer it. He gave his name and his position, a man of letters, and then waited. He waited a long time. At last the young girl returned and, a little embarrassed, murmured that her father could not receive him. Alexander smiled pleasantly: "Thank you, Mademoiselle, I'm not easily discouraged. I shall return."

Three days later he again went up the big stairway with its baluster of carved wood, and when the same young girl appeared he inquired: "Well, Mademoiselle, what's your impression, if you please? Do you think I shall be more fortunate today?"

Marie Nodier smiled. She did not understand why her father persisted in his presentiment that this tall chap with the amiable, pleasant expression was a poor wretch coming to ask for alms; and she went off again as his ambassador. . . . Several minutes passed. When Marie returned, she asked Dumas to follow her.

"I'm extremely grateful to you, Mademoiselle," he said, "you seem to have taken a great deal of trouble."

He passed through the antechamber, the dining room, and the drawing-room, and was led into the bedroom.

It was Nodier's custom to receive strangers only during the two hours in the morning before he got up, and that morning he awaited his persistent visitor with mocking smile; but as Dumas unfolded his tall figure before him, his smile came off.

"It seems to me," Marie murmured in her father's ear, "that the Alexander Dumas you expected and mine are two different persons."

"Ah! the poor fellow," Nodier answered softly, "he owes you a fine candle!"

A half hour later Alexander had his letter of introduction to Baron Taylor; and Nodier, captured by his charm and his good humor, called to him from the depths of his alcove that he must come again to see him, and "be on his guard against that rascal of a literary man who had twice taken his name."

The following week Dumas was received by Taylor,

not in his bed but in his bath, where he listened to the reading of *Christine*. He liked the play, but the vote of the Committee and of M. Picard, the authority of the moment in dramatic affairs, was necessary. This Picard was a terrible little man, hunch-backed, sharp-eyed, with pointed nose and chin. When Alexander presented himself to learn the verdict on *Christine*, Picard received him stiffly, declared flatly that the play was worthless, and playing with the manuscript like a cat with a mouse, inquired: "Have you any other means of existence than a literary career?"

"Monsieur, I have a position that brings me in fifteen hundred francs with Monseigneur the Duke of Orléans."

"Ah, very well," replied Picard, thrusting the manuscript between Alexander's fingers, "go back to your office, young man, go back to your office!"

Happily the Committee proved less severe, and the play was taken under consideration. Mlle. Mars was to play the lead.

When Alexander went to thank Nodier he was received with open arms and invited to his Sunday evenings. It was Alexander's first step into the world of celebrities. The drawing-room with its white panelling and Louis XV moldings was simple yet elegant, furnished with a dozen armchairs and a sofa covered with red cashmere; the window draperies of the same color;

a statue of Henry IV, and a portrait of the head of the household.

At six o'clock the table was set. Madame Nodier, crossing her pretty little feet before her as she sat in her armchair, received her guests affably; but if any one had the bad luck to be the thirteenth, he was banished to a separate table. There was no formality. Nodier was still the country gentleman from Franche-Comté. He preferred brown bread to white bread, pewter to silver, tallow candles to wax, and cabbage soup was to him the king of soups. He insisted that coffee should be served at the table because he thought that one should not get up between the dessert and the final perfection of dining.

Just before the end of the meal Madame Nodier would go to the drawing-room with Dumas who, thanks to his height, could light the candles without mounting a chair. He had become a son of the household, so to say, with his place set next to Marie Nodier, and he delighted every one by his direct intelligence and good-natured exuberance. At last he had found the milieu which suited him, where his nature could develop freely, and he revealed himself as he was in this friendly company.

When the guests rose from the table Nodier would be moaning and gasping as if he could hardly breathe; and as he lay stretched out on the sofa, he would let his slender, discolored hands and his feet dangle, while

his friends were all agreed that an inexpressible charm somehow radiated from all his awkwardness and all his carelessness. Dumas appreciated him more than any one else. For him Nodier was the man who knew everything in ancient and modern times, who had passed through the ages, a kind of Count de Saint-Germain; and when Nodier spoke Dumas was silent—with Alexander always the final proof of admiration.

What amazing stories he listened to! Whether on beetles, politics, or grammar, on German or Anglo-Saxon legends, on bibliography, occultism, or poetry, Nodier was inexhaustible. He had the kind of universal knowledge that Dumas envied, a mind open to everything curious and fantastic. He was as superstitious as a Negro, caustic as a pamphleteer, and his memory never failed him. He would tell you all about the habits of a strange insect he had discovered, the taratantaleo, or insect-velocipede, and a moment later recite in minute detail all the conspiracies under the Empire. His heavy, provincial accent resounded through the room. Alexander listened, storing away this wealth of anecdote. Nothing was lost on him.

Outside the frogs croaked on the shores of the island. It was pleasant in this friendly salon among these kind people; Marie Nodier, "the grand-marshal's lady of the palace," as her father called her, sat down at the piano; the armchairs were ranged along the walls and then they

began to dance while Nodier, in a window-niche, played cards. Everybody here was cheerful and unaffected. Sometimes they put five candles on the floor, in a square with one in the middle, and the various couples performed their figures "in the midst of these flaming dangers," while their shadows moved on the ceiling in fantastic silhouettes. . . . When his game was finished Nodier disappeared and a little later his wife would go upstairs carrying a smoking warming pan; but nothing interrupted the fun.

It was in the course of these evening parties which he dearly loved to recall in after years that Dumas became acquainted with most of the men who were to be his friends or his rivals—Fontaney and Alfred Johannot, two mysterious figures who entertained "a presentiment of the grave"; Vigny, who still kept up his intercourse with people; Barye, the sculptor, detached in the midst of the hubbub; Boulanger, the painter, melancholy today, giddy tomorrow; young Musset who was dreaming his *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie;* Francisque Michel, the Chartist; Valéry, librarian of the Palace at Versailles, who was so tall and so flat that Méry could write this of him:

"He stoops to catch the birds on the wing."

Here, too, young Dumas learned to care for Lamartine, the aristocrat, to whom he was always attached

though life kept them apart; and here he became the friend of a stocky youth with lofty brow, whom he had first met one day at a fair in the Boulevard du Temple in a booth where both had gone to gaze at a mermaid's skeleton. The young man was Victor Hugo, celebrated even then. A contemporary of Alexander and like him the son of a general, Hugo had a place apart in the salon of the Arsenal; grave and usually silent, precociously playing his rôle of torch-bearer, he came forward only when Nodier, tired of talking, exclaimed: "We've had enough prose. Now for the poet!"

Dumas' rôle was different. He enlivened all occasions with his high spirits and his animation was the delight of his hosts. When he asked Valéry, who had a cough, "Didn't you have cold feet last year?" everyone shouted. Nobody could be angry with this big fellow so clearly well-intentioned, who looked at you so honestly with frank blue eyes.

The Arsenal was not only a club for Alexander where his wits were sharpened, and a springboard for his imagination, but a support as well. Nodier was serviceable and on hand with good advice. A man of the fireside, Lamartine called him, the confidant of everyone. Dumas who had been so lonely now found some one to whom he could talk freely of his plans, and in expressing his hopes to Nodier he seemed to realize them. The older man listened with unwearied patience. He

approved his young friend's writing for the theater according to a new formula. "One should realize," he said, "that people in the big cities gain their education or make it over through melodrama." Had he himself not written, though he hadn't dared to sign his name to it, a frightful, fantastic play, *The Vampire?* And when, after one of these long chats, Alexander returned to the rue de l'Ouest, he felt buoyant, happy. Decidedly life was going to be beautiful.

The day after at the Palais Royal he had to come down to earth again. It was impossible to work quietly in the midst of so much racket, and as he had just been newly assigned to the department of forests he made a request for "a private niche," the retreat where a porter stored empty ink bottles. The request was thought outlandish and the porter, threatened with being ousted, answered Dumas insolently, who, with a back stroke of his hand, knocked the fellow's cap off. The gesture did no good and Alexander felt the wind of disfavor. Not satisfied with gadding after literature, he was permitting himself to be impolite—that went beyond the limits! Dumas pulled himself together, and galled, returned to his harness. He was so weary in the evening that he went to bed as soon as he got home. But at midnight he was up and at his work again. . . .

Meanwhile *Christine* was still waiting in the folder at the Théâtre-Français.

Alexander went on with his varied studies in the school of sentiment; he showed no disposition toward stability in love. His Negro blood made him find something charming in polygamy. He had separated from Catherine after a violent scene, but he still assisted her to the best of his ability. He quickened the pace of his adventures, seeking his pleasure without too much refining. When one of his passing mistresses became pregnant, he wrote to a friend: "I am not so presumptuous as to believe myself the author of this miracle, but if the baby does bring to this vale of tears a head of kinky hair, I shall have to be convinced."

On June 3, 1827, however, he experienced something like a bolt from the blue. One of his comrades, Théodore Villenave, had invited him to take tea that day with his father, who lived at 82, rue de Vaugirard, a little mansion that had been turned into a museum. In the salon, by the side of a bronze urn which had contained the heart of Bayard, Alexander admired a portrait of Anne Boleyn by Holbein and a landscape of Claude Lorrain. Passing over the barricades of books and portfolios filled with autographs and engravings, he reached the master of the house. This elder Villenave was a curious person. He had lived at Nantes at the time of Carrier and the drownings of 1792, since which time the

mania of collecting had occupied him utterly. He lived buried in history and in dust, and this exclusive taste had not developed kindliness in him. His countenance, crowned by white hair carefully put up in curlpapers, was suspicious, without a smile; and Alexander did not find again, in this citadel of books, the warm welcome of the Arsenal.

Suddenly a young woman appeared. She was not pretty, rather thin, and of very dark complexion—in every way Catherine's opposite—but with her very soft black eyes, beautiful hair, and something half modest, half coquettish, she was altogether attractive. It was Mélanie Waldor, Villenave's daughter, married to a Captain of Infantry who rarely came to Paris. Alexander blushed and instinctively leaned against the door for support. This apparition of youth in a decaying cavern overwhelmed him; for the first time in his life he did not know what to say and felt ridiculous. . . .

He became an intimate of the family, beguiled old Villenave by giving him autographs from General Dumas' collection, and established the pleasant habit of going to the rue de Vaugirard twice a day. Mélanie received him with a charming, slightly melancholy air; she was thirty years old—five years older than Alexander—devoted to literature, wrote verse, and apparently had not found happiness in marriage. Dumas declared his feelings and in what ardent fashion! She

replied with virtuous indignation; and the next day he wrote to her: "Forget my madness of yesterday, above all forget my boldness. The strength with which you rejected the idea that your friendship might become something more has almost cured me of the idea." But he was really not cured and his protestations of love, his exclamations of despair were only multiplied. Ah! if she would but understand him, become his Muse, his inspiration, he would conquer the world!

Mélanie allowed herself to be overwhelmed, deluded by his voice now vehement, now caressing. The passion of this young savage had a different tone from the conjugal C-major of Captain Waldor; and Alexander little by little pressed his advantage. He read *Christine* to her and his comments were more thrilling than the text. Mélanie's resistance was growing weaker, but the conventional modesty of her class still restrained her, when Alexander decided the moment had come to end this situation. He rented a small, discreet room "to shelter their love," according to formula; and to assure his victory, he disturbed Mélanie with Machiavellian letters: "If you had told me the truth, if I were vicious! . . . Oh! yes, in matters of love you have the purity, I might almost say the ignorance of a child of fifteen." She promised to come, if he would agree not to ruffle her. Could he not be satisfied with a pure, ethereal friendship?

To this he answered: "Observe that there is a refinement of cruelty in saying to me, 'I shall come to see you looking my loveliest,' and then imposing conditions on me. . . . Yes, yes, I shall spare your beautiful toilet, have no fear. . . . I ask only that you take off your hat and your veil." And so what was bound to come to pass came to pass; on September 12, 1827, Mélanie yielded.

Alexander enjoyed a wordy triumph. When he was not seeing his mistress, he was writing to her at every hour of the day and of the night, beginning at eight o'clock in the evening, continuing until midnight, stopping at two o'clock, and beginning again at dawn. It was truly a glorious passion. He wrote to her in verse. He broke off in prose. "Ah, and now to my task!" (This meant that he was writing at the office and had just been given a report to copy.) Now he struck the note of prudence: "Be calm, my love, although your exhaltation *(sic)* proves to me how much you love me," and wrote on: "Adieu, my angel. Hunger is consuming me. . . . I shall be with you at a quarter to seven."

Plainly Alexander is a robust lover, not given to languishing; he frightens even Mélanie by his violent demands. In vain she tries to lead him over to a more platonic temper, to a more moderate expenditure of his ardor. He replies: "Believe me, I am so much in love with love only because it seems to bind us more closely together. The after moments are delightful, perhaps

sweeter than love itself. Believe me, I know how to relish love!"

Mélanie thought he relished it too much. She suffered from suffocation and from palpitations. She pined away and became dyspeptic. Alexander, who had an excellent digestion, was displeased. "You must fatten yourself up quickly, quickly, my dear; and I shall make you thin again by plaguing you;" and as soothing syrup he sends "a thousand million kisses" to his thin lady-love.

On April 30, 1828, the newspapers announced that the Théâtre-Français had just accepted a play by M. Alexander Dumas, called *Christine à Fontainebleau;* they added that the recommendation of the Duke of Orléans had been instrumental in bringing this about. Alexander, who knew very well what the views of Monseigneur and his departments were about him, smiled but did not correct the statement. His years of apprenticeship were over.

CHAPTER III

"THE CROWN IS MINE!"

REHEARSALS had begun at the Théâtre-Français and Alexander saw almost daily the same Mlle. Mars who had so agitated him a few years before. But she did not, it seemed to him, improve on closer acquaintance. Since she had made her reputation in playing the classical repertory, she did not understand how any one could depart from the sacred rules; as an actress of Racine's queens and Molière's coquettes, she thought the rôle of Christine of Sweden extravagant and sure to fail. She was headstrong, too, and fancied that she knew better than anyone else what the public wanted, so she worked very quietly to destroy the play in which she was to appear, declaring that certain lines were impossible and absurd. But Alexander had lost his provincial shyness and maintained that his verses were excellent. Mlle. Mars, with nerves on edge, pretended to yield. "We'll recite them, these verses of yours, and you shall see what effect they will make!" and she went on with her underhand work of wrecking the play. Alexander displeased her decidedly. He was not sub-

missive; he seemed cold to her charms; and when he had left her dressing-room, she would say to her maid: "He smells like a Negro! His hair has the Negro smell! Open all the windows, open them quickly!"

Thanks to her incessant interference, the rehearsals dragged. Alexander began to lose heart, and when he heard that a certain M. Brault, author of another *Christine,* an old gentleman with one foot in the grave, was eager to have his play produced before he made his earthly exit, gallantly he yielded his place. He deserved credit for this, for he was wholly dependent on his small clerk's salary; but the spirit of Alexandre-Antoine was in his grandson. "Whether I was earning 1,500 or 15,000 francs a year," he said later, "I have always played the *grand seigneur* a bit."

Besides, in literature as in love, creation was no effort for him. When *Christine* was laid aside, he came by chance on another subject for a play, while turning a page of the historian Anquetil describing the love affairs of the Duchess of Guise and of the Duke's vengeance on her lover. To this tragic story he added two fragments from the chronicles of l'Estoile, a scene from Walter Scott's *The Abbot,* and interlarded the whole with words and oaths of the Renaissance. In two months *Henri III et sa Cour,* a drama in prose, was, if not written—it never was quite that—at least set on paper.

What an advantage not to be embarrassed by too much knowledge!

The first reading of the play was before Mélanie; the audience was enthusiastic. Alexander dashed off to Nestor Roqueplan, a journalist, who lived in a little room on the fifth floor, with a mantelpiece adorned with a basin instead of a clock and duelling pistols instead of candelabra. With his second hearer he had the same success. There remained only the actors whose approval Dumas wanted to be sure of before the final decision. *Henri III* was submitted to the actor Firmin, who might play the principal part; Firmin approved. All was well.

The play was accepted by the Théâtre-Français on September 17, 1828; the rôles were to be assigned . . . but Alexander was counting without Mlle. Mars. She was not willing that the page—a moving, sympathetic character appearing in disguise, for which the author had a special predilection—should be given to Mlle. Despréaux. Dumas, who found the young Despréaux very pleasant, did not yield. His exasperation grew. Why, in heaven's name, had he returned to this wasps' nest? Weren't there other theaters in Paris? "This Théâtre-Français," he exclaimed, "is one of the circles of hell forgotten by Dante where God sends the writers of tragedy who have the strange whim to make the least possible money, to have twenty-five performances in-

stead of a hundred, and to be decorated in their old age with the cross of the Legion of Honor, not for success achieved but for sufferings endured."

Belated wisdom; he was already in the thick of green-room battles. And then, one fine morning, he is summoned before the director general of the secretariat of the Duke of Orléans. M. de Broval, a man of the world, explains to him that literature and administration are enemies who can not live together. "Choose between them." One foot in the stirrup and glory calling, Dumas renounces his salary and borrows 3000 francs from the banker Laffitte, leaving the manuscript of *Henri III* as a pledge. Liberty! Fortune! They are soon to be his!

Joyfully he now watches over *his* rehearsals, and puts the finishing touches to what really is a bit too much a rough draft. He acquires a taste for this theater air, makes his peace with Mlle. Mars, who will be a superb Duchess of Guise, and bestows his attentions on Mlle. Virginie Bourbier, an actress so charming that he can not refrain from telling Mélanie, too, all about her.

To see him, you would take him for a hardened old dramatist; he has an eye for everything, finds the most effective word, the moving gesture, supervises the scenery, the costumes, the whole setting—and the press. When an obscure journalist criticizes *Henri III* in advance, he looks him up, stick in hand, accompanied by

a friend, and demands a correction. "The pamphleteer" humbles himself before the giant. These are days of expectation, of fever, and of joy. While Mélanie, consumed by jealousy, pines away, Alexander swells and waxes pleased with himself.

Three days before February 11, 1829, the date set for the first performance, Madame Dumas, who now lived not far from the Villenaves, had an attack which left her paralyzed in one arm and one leg. Alexander, who adored his mother, was in despair. He could not dream of postponing his play. Three days and nights he kept running between his house and the theater, tormented by having to help along the birth of his play and caring for his sick mother.

On February 11 he dresses himself in haste. He can't find a collar. He cuts one out of cardboard. He dashes to the theater and looks through the hole in the curtain . . . The house is full. In the balcony he sees his patron Monseigneur the Duke of Orléans and his official family who want to do honor to their employee—a sign of the times—; Hugo and Vigny are in a box; other comrades are scattered here and there; and in a discreet corner box is Mélanie.

People about the theater had doubted whether the scene where the Duke of Guise twists his wife's hand

with his steel gauntlet would go over well. Alexander himself was sure of it. The scene was his declaration of war, the bold stroke which would overthrow tradition. . . . When the Duchess of Guise cried, "Henri, you are hurting me, you are hurting me frightfully!"—Mlle. Mars spoke the line in a tone of appalling suffering—the audience shuddered. A moment's hesitation and then an enthusiastic tumult burst out. The actor Firmin, endowed with epileptic ardor, forgot his part and held the scene with his convulsions. Everyone applauded. The public stood up, as if seized with madness. And the delirium turned into frenzy when Alexander appeared after the fourth curtain, radiant and "holding his head so high that his disordered mop of hair threatened to take fire from the stars."

He had just come from seeing his mother, and, having found her no worse, he enjoyed his triumph to the utmost; Mélanie, when he went to her box, was weeping; his relative, Deviolaine, who had sworn that Alexander would never amount to anything, was literally moved to the depths; and his friends from the Arsenal were exuberant with joy. At the fall of the curtain there was unbridled pandemonium. "Melpomene and Thalia have been surpassed!" the younger generation shouted on the passing of Alexandre Duval, Népomucène Lemercier, and the classicists who had too long monopolized the

theater. The tyranny "of the old wigs" was broken. A new world was before them.

Next day, Alexander, who had spent the night on a mattress next to his mother's bed, woke to find himself celebrated; and poor Madame Dumas was dumfounded at the masses of flowers that filled her room. His success was unheard of, complete. This young mulatto with his paper collar, unknown and badly educated, a stranger to the theories and dogmas of romanticism, this clerk at 1,500 francs a year who had left his position, this muscular young faun ran with freer, ampler stride past his contemporaries in the race, and could now exclaim: "The crown is mine!"

The public did not see that this was merely the plate and varnish of antiquity nor recognize the borrowing from everywhere; it admired the tone, the color, the brilliance, the dramatic ease and richness, all the things that were new to their eyes. The gauntlet of the Duke of Guise made them shiver; d'Epernon's sling, the cup-and-ball of Joyeuse, the old oaths, "God's Blood" and "God's Death," filled them with rapture. They were carried away.

After a bit, criticism had its chance, nor did it fail to make the most of it. *Le Corsaire* wrote that the work was a monstrosity and the author a Jesuit who had a pension from the secret fund; *La Gazette de France,* saw in it "a flagrant conspiracy against the throne and

the altar." Others considered Dumas "an adventurous spirit, not profound, but versatile, who had relieved these scraps of history with scenes of genuine passion." Another newspaper man remarked, more severely, that in all this rubbish there was only one interesting scene and that did not belong to the author. The historians objected to the liberties taken by Dumas with the portrait of Guise, unworthy of le Balafré. Last, the Academy, speaking through the high priests of classicism, Arnault, Jouy, Viennet, and Andrieux, denounced in the tragic manner the harm that such pieces would do to the Théâtre-Français, the theater founded by Louis-le-Grand, which "would fall below even the lowest popular stages," unless order were reëstablished.

To no effect. Alexander was hailed as a great dramatist and great man by the young romantics who adopted him and raised him on this shields. Sainte-Beuve glorified in song this happy era when the famous men of the future were still marching on, hand in hand:

Ils étaient bons et grands. L'amère jalousie
Jamais chez eux n'arma le miel de poésie
De son grêle aiguillon.[1]

[1] They were good and great. Bitter jealousy
Never among them armed sweet poetry
With his sharp spur.

As though it were the most natural thing in the world, Alexander settled himself in his new glory. He was born for this. He posed before the dignified David d'Angers, "a blond and straightlaced man," who modeled a medallion of him, and before Achille Devéria, who made an astonishing etching. One of them describes how the young conqueror, Mélanie's happy lover, looked: "His head, almost childlike in character, is attractive, good-looking, charming, adorned with a cloud of hair and a very tiny, black beard, straggling, scanty, and as soft as down; his nose is still uncertain, but his mouth is that of a youth who is feeling the coming of dawn." Alexander has given up his long frock coat from Villers-Cotterets, and, "slender as a dandy fresh from the pages of *Jeunes-France,*" he now wears a tight coat with collar à la Goethe, and a light waistcoat under whose lapels passes the black cord of his eyeglasses. Why eyeglasses? Alexander had excellent eyesight. But the setting in which he now displays his elegances proclaims the newness of his fortune, and the divan on which he rests would not disgrace a furnished apartment.

Being what he was, he accepted the honors and amenities of his new life gracefully. Emile de Girardin asked him to write for his journal, *Le Voleur,* and requested a biographical article "to which he would be happy to append his very favorable opinion of the

author of *Henri III*"; Madame de Girardin, the Muse Delphine, took a liking to him, and the ties that bound him to the austere Vigny became closer. The Duke of Orléans, proud of his employee, appointed him librarian at a yearly salary of 1200 francs—the duke always remained a careful manager—but after all the post was only a sinecure.

Alexander now began to have larger views. He rented a little house at Passy for Catherine Lebay and his son, established himself in an apartment at the corner of the rue de l'Université and the rue du Bac, and "looking toward the future," made an agreement with a neighboring restaurant-keeper for his board for one year. He thought this an excellent speculation.

His circle, formerly consisting of only three or four friends, Leuven, Méry, Frédéric Soulié, and Laurent Pichat, a young poet of frail health, now grew larger daily, for every one found this big fellow sympathetic who laughed at his victory and at the pontifical defeat. When somebody told him that Casimir Delavigne had not been present at the first night of *Henri III*, he answered: "Nonsense! That's as if you'd try to make me believe that the condemned man isn't on the scaffold erected for him." He did not take things to heart and it amused him enormously that drawing-rooms gossiped of his African passions and tropical customs. He re-

mained high-spirited, agreeable, a good fellow. He was not envious and recognized his own limitations.

On February 11, Hugo, on congratulating him, had said: "And now it's my turn!" At the end of July Alexander was asked to the rue Notre-Dame des Champs to hear *Marion de Lorme* read.

The whole pleiad was present—Musset stretched out on a couch, Sainte-Beuve bustling about his beloved Victor, Eugène Delacroix, "distant, haughty, and with a touch of the exotic," Balzac, grown stout and bursting out of his tight coat, Vigny, Mérimée. . . . Hugo read on "with his voice impressive in its monotony," and when he had finished, there was an explosion of applause and extravagant praise. Dumas, more excited than all the rest, lifted Hugo up in his arms and cried, "We shall carry you to glory!" While he was stuffing himself full of little cakes, he kept repeating, "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

His enthusiasm was sincere. Magnificence of style overwhelmed him "who was above all lacking in style"; and he would willingly have given *Henri III* to have written the fourth act of *Marion de Lorme*. While Balzac, "who never could succeed in writing verse," affected to disdain poetry—like Stendhal and Mérimée —Dumas frankly avowed his inferiority. He acknowledged that he had never had a feeling for the music of words and he respected those who had the gift of song.

In him there was no bitterness, no desire to belittle the merit of others, no ill-natured reservation.

Hugo quarreled with Nodier, bitter jealousy scattered the brothers of the Arsenal. Dumas alone remained a faithful friend, always devoted, always ardent; and Nodier, who was now aging, said of his beloved Alexander: "He exempts me from talking."

Success did not change his high spirits or his ingenuousness. A sister of the painter Amaury Duval describes how once she was returning from the Arsenal on foot with Dumas who was carrying her pattens and her comb; it was one o'clock in the morning; and the young woman was so tired that she could hardly walk. Suddenly Dumas, looking up at an unusually beautiful moon cried: "Ah! Madame, what a wonderful moon! Won't you go as far as the gate of l'Etoile? Don't you feel yourself carried beyond yourself by some invisible power?" She, more earthly, answered: "I feel myself carried beyond myself so little, Monsieur, that a hack would have more charms in my eyes at this moment than all the moons in the world." Dumas was stunned and could not speak for a quarter of an hour. . . . A little later, when he had become the "familiar friend at the Quai Conti," where the young woman lived, he appalled the classical Alexandre Duval and the historian Mignet by declaring flatly that Racine had ruined the theater and Boileau, poetry.

As *Marion de Lorme* had been forbidden by the censorship, it was Vigny who upheld the banner of romanticism and fought the new battle in October, 1829, with his *Othello*. Alexander was present in the first row. It may have been he who, in the hubbub, shouted to one of the classicists: "I shall drive your hisses down your throat with this dagger!" He was present again on the opening night of *Hernani* when Théophile Gautier rallied his troops around his crimson waistcoat. After this, having labored for the common good, Dumas began to think of himself and of *Christine* which had finally found a place at the Odéon. His friends came forward, and Soulié, author of a *Christine* which had fallen flat and also director of a sawmill, generously sent fifty of his workmen to fill the pit and help the play along.

When Dumas, after the performance, was crossing the Place de l'Odéon, he heard some one call him by name. A carriage stopped and a lady got out who rushed toward him and threw her arms around him. "Ah! Monsieur, what talent you have and how well you know how to write about women!" It was Marie Dorval, an actress supreme in boulevard melodramas, a daughter of the profession, and soon to be one beloved more for Alexander. At his house he gathered round him the admirers of *Christine* and when he saw the austere

Vigny grow more human and tender while looking at Marie Dorval, he smiled. . . .

Sainte-Beuve, in his exclusive veneration for his dear Victor Hugo, wrote about *Christine*: "There is talent displayed in the last two acts, but it is talent of the second class, and as much below *Hernani* as the hyssop is below the cedar." Stendhal for his part held that *Henri III* was "only a Henri III à la Marivaux"; and Alexander reflected on these words. He saw that he was ill at ease in poetic drama and that he had not yet found the true tragic subject—some subject very somber, full of concentrated passion so that it might go straight to the heart of the public, appealing through the emotions and not through theatrical tinsel.

It was Mélanie who supplied this subject without suspecting it. Jealousy always preyed on her. She was not unaware of Alexander's fondness for Virginie Bourbier, his reconciliation with Mlle. Mars, and his meeting with Dorval. She was becoming irritable, demanding letters at a definite hour and always ready to pick a quarrel. He tried to soothe her: "Oh Mélanie, never be angry at me! When you are displeased it cuts me to the soul"; to which he tactlessly added that the hours which he spent with her ought to be "hours of recreation and not of labor." She grew incensed, and he tried to get out of it by plunging into generalities—"Our love has changed in character of course. Our feelings may be

different, but our love is still our life. We are still happy."

Abruptly and without apparent reason, this lover who can reason so clearly takes it into his head to become jealous of the husband. Yet Captain Waldor had never stood in his way. When the captain had failed to gain an appointment at Courbevoie, Alexander, thanks to his ministerial connections, had straightened things out, and Waldor was able to continue his obscure life in a provincial garrison. But tumultuous passions are becoming to a Romantic. He has need to turn Byronic, become savage and dissatisfied, join love with death. Dumas practices the game. He would have Mélanie all to himself, snatch her in his arms before the whole world, and cry: "She belonged to me before she knew me!" He would cover her face with kisses, not kisses *ordinaires,* but "with kisses that burn, electrify the whole body, make one shiver with delight, and are so full of happiness that almost it is sorrow."

To vary the theme, he pays his farewells to the room where their love had hidden itself, "our little room which we shall probably never again see together, which other indifferent people will occupy without knowing what took place there. No breath will hint to them of the emotions we experienced. For them there will only be four walls adorned with more or less shabby wallpaper and with a more or less fine mirror which like

the heart of a coquette preserves none of the pictures which it has reflected. . . ."

Another fatal idea strikes him; he beholds the phantom of her husband, her legal master, rise before him. "Mélanie, at last you understand me," he cries, "you know what love is and so you know what jealousy is. Have you ever felt anything like it? Yet the idiots who made religions invented a hell of physical sufferings! How ill they understood tortures! It's pitiable. A hell where I would see you always in another's arms! Curses! The thought of it would inspire crime."

The part he is playing absorbs the fine fellow. He pretends he is becoming consumptive. His handkerchief is stained with blood. Is he going to die? No, no! "How can you believe that I could die while you still love me? I should become an unbeliever and a blasphemer, my angel, because I could not believe in God. I should curse him for separating me from you!"

There is no longer any little room. They make their rendezvous at Pêre-Lachaise. He delights and terrifies her by rambling on about his childish metaphysics; he wants to convert her to Satanism, to hatred of this world; immediately afterwards he regrets his imprudent words. "Noon! What a letter I've written you! If I could recall it! But I hope that it is so stained with my tears that you can not read it. I slept hardly an hour and a half—a sleep of the damned, with dreams,

visions, delirium. And to think what they call Love in the world of society! What puppets they are!"

Mélanie, who is herself a poet in the manner of Anaïs Ségalas, Elisa Mercoeur, and Victorine Babois, is in the seventh heaven of delight and proudly rejoices in this volcanic love to which Alexander applied the word "fatality" from its inception. The passion of the famous young man flatters her and she displays with pride the scarf with the picture of Saint-Mégrin in *Henri III* which he has given her as souvenir.

With Dumas, it was otherwise. As his love for Mélanie cooled in fact, he made it more ardent in letters and literature, inflamed his imagination, and unconsciously invented his drama. He, on whom life was smiling and who basked in that smile for the moment, transforms himself into an unfortunate creature, scorned by society and condemned to live alone "like a bastard." Mélanie becomes in his fancy the virtuous woman who struggles against her love, who yields, and is consumed by remorse. At last Captain Waldor appears, to do justice. . . . But how should he end this bourgeois tragedy fittingly? How would it be if he had the bastard kill his mistress, to save her honor, at the moment when he is surprised by the husband? It was a stroke of genius! Dumas set to work and on Wednesday, June 9, 1830, at noon he wrote the final speech of *Antony:* "She resisted me. I have assassinated her."

At the moment when she became a romantic heroine, Mélanie was unaware that Alexander had set forth on new love affairs. At the end of May, 1830, he had met at the actor Firmin's a pretty young woman "who played the Mars parts in the provinces." She had jet black hair, deep blue eyes, "a nose like that of the Venus de Milo and pearls instead of teeth." Bell Krebsamer compared favorably with Mélanie. Dumas was pleased that there were so many enchanting creatures under the sun. He immediately took Bell under his protection, promised that she should one day play the Duchess of Guise in *Henri III*, and advised her to remain in Paris. Bell, seeing a brilliant future before her, took lodgings in the rue de l'Université, a few steps from her protector; and, as it had been in the days of Catherine Lebay, the two households were soon one.

Alexander had laid aside the mask of despair. He was rich and happy; the season was propitious for travel, and as he had never known the sea, he decided to go, accompanied by Bell,

Contempler ton azur, ô Méditerranée! [1]

[1] To contemplate thine azure blue, O Mediterranean!

CHAPTER IV

REVOLUTION AND SATANISM

On July 26, 1830, at five o'clock in the evening, Dumas was setting forth to take the mail coach to Marseilles when he learned of the publication of Charles X's orders suspending the liberty of the press, dissolving the Chamber of Deputies, and modifying the electoral law. Up to that time he had been fairly indifferent to politics; he called himself a republican without really knowing why, perhaps because his father had been one. Now that all Paris was excited, Alexander forgot Bell and their journey completely; he put on his hunting outfit, seized his gun, and, like d'Artagnan, threw himself into the scrimmage. The fate of the elder Bourbons did not greatly interest him; he had never asked any favors of them, and he felt entirely free of obligation toward them.

After a tour of inspection through the city he came home utterly worn out. Paris resembled the bridge of a ship at the moment of clearing. Although the fire was banked and was even then blazing forth at the Place de la Bourse, revolution was not yet actual.

Next morning his servant came to wake him, wild with fear—the rioters were taking the Artillery Museum near Saint Thomas of Aquinas by assault. Dumas, half dressed, rushed down the stairway, rejoined the insurgents, broke into the Museum with them, decked himself out in a helmet, a shield, a sword of Francis I, and an arquebuse of Charles IX, and then, since he was after all the author of *Henri III*, he laid these royal relics reverently upon his bed. Then he departed once more, armed with his gun, along the quays, and from behind the lions of the Institute he fired at the Swiss who were defending the Louvre. . . . He was filled with joy, the delight of battle! He was in his element; but he felt awfully hungry; and as the sister of Amaury Duval, the lady who hadn't been able to appreciate the moon, lived only a few steps away, he rang the bell.

He made a sensational entrance. Black with powder and with perspiration rolling down his cheeks, Alexander described his campaign while gulping down an enormous cup of coffee. Then he stopped abruptly and, gazing at the Louvre which could be seen through the window, he said: "Do you realize that this would be an excellent place to shoot from?"

"Never, never," cried his terrified hostess. "I don't want my house to be a point of attack"—and Alexander walked out, deeply distressed to abandon so excellent a position.

The victory of the people took shape. Dumas played his part a little in the manner of the fly on the wheel of the coach. He saw the leaders of the movement, Cavaignac, Arago, and Charras, and by contact with them became strengthened in his republican faith; and when the conquerors marched on Rambouillet in order to put the fear of God into the heart of the dethroned Charles X, he accompanied them.

But he could not fit himself to this subordinate rôle. He must play a star part; and as powder was needed in Paris, he offered to go to Soissons to get hold of some there. It was a confidential mission which he carried out magnificently. After he had passed through Villers-Cotterets as a conqueror and sown the good seed of republicanism, he arrived at Soissons and ordered the king's lieutenant, M. de Liniers, to deliver up the powder. The lieutenant, who had experienced several revolutions in the colonies, was not intimidated by Alexander's pistol; but Madame de Liniers, frightened by the big fellow with the woolly hair and complexion bronzed by three days' sun, cried out to her husband: "Oh! my darling, yield! This is another revolt of the Negroes!" Dumas, master of the field of battle, went to break down the door of the powder magazine.

When he came back to Paris he was embraced by La Fayette, "the hero of Two Worlds," who was at the Hotel de Ville; and the Duke of Orléans received him

with these words, "M. Dumas, you have just achieved your finest drama." Raised to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, Alexander offered to devote himself to the cause once more. He will undertake any embassy, to Prussia, Spain, or Russia. He is ready for anything. . . . Once more Mélanie interferes. She was lamenting at La Jarrie, a little farm in the Vendée, not far from Clisson, where she had fled far from the riots in Paris. A geranium which Alexander had given her had been broken, and she saw in this a sign of approaching ill-fortune. Dumas reassured her as best he could. "I shall not accept any military mission, my angel, but a movement like this could not be accomplished unless I lent it my name. Thank God! It has been accomplished." And then he added cautiously, "Adieu, my love, you would be wrong to come to Paris at this time."

Mélanie was not convinced and wanted to see her lover again. At that moment Alexander conceived the brilliant idea of starting off, not for Prussia, Spain, or Russia, but for La Vendée to organize the National Guard there, and he laid this plan before La Fayette.

"Have you reflected on this?" asked La Fayette.

"As much as I am capable of reflecting on anything. I am a man of instinct, not of reflection!"

La Fayette approved. Dumas had a magnificent uniform made for himself—a shako with red plumes, silver epaulettes and belt, coat and trousers of king's blue,

and a tri-colored cockade. In this array he traveled over the high roads of the West with an insurgent as his guide, a counterfeiter whom he had saved from the galleys. The peasants looked at this "Monsieur Tricolore" with hostile eye, but Alexander was so affable that he disarmed them. After visiting the melancholy Mélanie at La Jarrie, he returned to the rue de l'Université, having organized nothing at all, but with the material for an imposing report on the need of opening up roads through Le Bocage.

During his absence the situation in Paris had greatly changed. The republicans perceived a little too late that the Duke of Orléans, who had now become Louis Philippe, had, by united front with the liberals, juggled away the revolution. A bourgeois monarchy had succeeded the legitimate monarchy, but it was still a monarchy; and the republicans, who had been duped, engaged in an open struggle with the government of the Citizen-King.

Alexander had no serious grievance against Louis Philippe, who in March had requested Charles X to bestow a decoration upon his employee, "whose dramatic successes seem of a nature to deserve this honor." He appreciated the unaffected simplicity of the new dynasty and his personal interest of course urged him to march

in the direction of the rising sun. But his character was such that he turned his back on it. Was it his atavistic republicanism? Was it the influence of his new friends, Cavaignac and Arago? Both undoubtedly influenced him. In any event an involuntary bit of awkwardness on his part brought about a rupture with Louis Philippe.

The latter had just dissolved the Artillery of the National Guard, suspected, quite properly, of revolutionary sympathies; and a few days later, on December 31, 1830, the New Year's reception took place at the Tuileries. Alexander presented himself in the uniform of an artillery-man.

"Ah! good day, Dumas," said the king as soon as he caught sight of him. "I see you are acting true to form!"

Alexander stood open-mouthed, bewildered by this greeting, when Vatout, the librarian, murmured in his ear: "You have come to make your New Year's visit to the King *en habit de dissous*." Dumas was now completely at a loss. His *"habit de dix sous"?* "His suit worth ten *sous"?* What were they making fun of? When his mistake was explained and he understood that the *"habit de dissous"* was his uniform of the National Guard that had just been dissolved by the King, he exclaimed, "Do you think that I read *Le Moniteur?"* and he swore never to set foot in the Tuileries again.

His displeasure was so great that he wanted to give resounding publicity to the breach. Napoleon was then

all the vogue, and the manager of the Porte Saint-Martin Theater, M. Harel, Mlle. George's friend, asked Dumas to put together a play on the life of the Emperor. But the difficulty was to get hold of Dumas. This devil of a fellow always slips between your fingers! Today he is at the rue de l'Université, tomorrow in the country, on still another day on some excursion with Bell. So Harel took strong measures. He summoned Alexander, shut him up in his own house under lock and key with the Memorial and several other documents—meanwhile sending Bell a bracelet to keep her quiet—and informed the author that he would not restore his freedom until the play was delivered. Alexander protested as a matter of form, but at bottom the procedure entertained him greatly. He set to work with scissors and paste pot, and in a week he had patched up his piece.

Napoléon Bonaparte, although acted by Frédérick Lemaître, enjoyed only a qualified success—George Sand called it a contemptible piece; but Dumas seized the occasion to proclaim his attitude toward authority. In the preface to his play he solemnly notified Louis Philippe that he resumed his freedom of action: "Sire, it is long since I wrote and published that in my case the man of letters would serve only as preface to the man of politics. . . . I am all but certain that on the day when I have attained thirty years, I shall be appointed

deputy; I am now twenty-eight, Sire! . . ." If he had not hired himself to the Empire which had left his father and his mother penniless, or to the Restoration, he could not, in all conscience, rally to the new régime, whose acts were "arbitrary and destructive of liberty." In short, he tendered his resignation. While waiting until old enough to enter the Chamber of Deputies, he would consecrate himself to art. He would devote himself to "the art that entertains and interests" —a fairly safe formula.

Louis Philippe, on reading this challenge, simply said, "Just a big schoolboy!" but the big schoolboy took his rôle seriously and dreamed of nothing less than making over dramatic art by exploiting the Théâtre-Français with Victor Hugo. Hugo, the business man, had started the project. There was to be no subsidy from the state, but a guarantee of 2000 francs of the receipts for every play by Racine or Voltaire produced. With fifty-four performances, there would be 108,000 francs a year assured, and, as the expenses of the theater were only 1500 francs a day, the daily gain would amount to 500 francs. . . . Naturally this magnificent plan resulted in nothing and Alexander cherished a certain acrimony on the subject.

He who was usually so confident became depressed. After the great undertakings of July, after Soissons and La Vendée, he was relapsing into dullness. The charms

of Bell did not succeed in raising his spirits. His name had disappeared from the newspapers and that, since the success of *Henri III*, was something he could not endure. His *Napoléon* was worthless, he knew, and his faith in a dramatic career was tottering. He might have become prudent and returned peacefully to his office, as Picard had advised him to do; but, blunderer that he was, he had just burned his bridges behind him. So he stuck to *Antony*, forgotten since June; he clung to it as if it were his sheet-anchor.

After the play was accepted by the Théâtre-Français, Alexander directed the rehearsals energetically; but as they went on, he no longer recognized his own work. Mlle. Mars reduced the pathetic rôle of Adèle to a puppet like one of M. Scribe's rôles, and Firmin "softened all the asperities" of the hero so that Adèle and Antony became two charming lovers of the Gymnase who might just as well have been named Arthur and Céleste.

"Such a nice play," "A charming piece of work," his friends said to Dumas. "We never thought you capable of working in this genre!" "Nor should I have thought it," he answered, his heart torn by the way in which the actors were prettifying his drama. Happily Mlle. Mars, bent on having her new toilets make their proper effect,

wanted to have the production wait until the new luster, lighted by gas, should be installed. Dumas seized on this pretext, withdrew his play, and took it to Marie Dorval.

He had neglected her a bit since his liaison with Bell, but he had always preserved a special partiality for her. Frank, thoughtless, feeling intensely, and acting instinctively, she was like Dumas in her friendliness and good-nature. When he now came to her house, he wanted to resume their former relations, but though she embraced him warmly and called him "My great big doggie!" she repulsed him. Vigny loved her, and she loved Vigny, she said.

"In that case, my dear," Dumas replied, "receive my most sincere compliments. First of all, de Vigny is a poet of immense talent; he is also a true gentleman. He's more worth your while than me, a mulatto."

But Dorval insisted on explaining her passion. "Monsieur le Comte" at first had been so timid and reserved that she hadn't in the least understood his attitude. Was he going to make a proposal of marriage? But he had finally declared his sentiments and she, as a good natured girl, had not made him languish; and now Monsieur le Comte loved her furiously, and wrote "little exaltations" for her. Ah, but he was an ardent lover! She went into details that amused Alexander and concluded with this: "You know there are men whom one

doesn't deceive—they're the men of genius; or if one does deceive them, upon my word, so much the worse for those who do the deceiving!"

Dumas did not object. All this interested him much less than *Antony*, the manuscript of which he had in his pocket. He sat down in an armchair, Dorval curled up at his feet, and he read the play to her. . . . She was carried away—it was the play of which she had dreamed! Even now she knew how she was going to read such and such a speech and with what gestures she would accompany it. So, shutting up Dumas in her husband's room (for Dorval was married to a journalist named Merle who had the spirit of the eighteenth century and left her absolutely free), she ordered him to rewrite certain scenes and to emphasize certain incidents.

Thanks to Dorval, *Antony* recovered its fatal and satanic style; but the advice of Vigny might he helpful, and so Dumas wrote to the poet to reassure him about his feelings toward Dorval: "As to doing anything which would cause you pain, and you may take the word in all its implications, consider me a dishonorable man if I should do so." Vigny actually did supply some final touches to the play, to its advantage, and on May 3, 1831, *Antony* was ready to revolutionize Paris.

On that evening there was a curious excitement stirring round the approaches to the Porte Saint-Martin. There were strange, savage faces, curled mustachios,

pointed imperials, hair worn in the Merovingian fashion or cut like a brush, extravagant doublets, coats with velvet revers, cloaks of green oilcloth, hats of every shape "excepting of course the usual shape." The ladies, a bit frightened, stepped out of their carriages dressed in the style of the day, with their hair arranged à la girafe, their high tortoise-shell combs, their mutton-leg sleeves, and their short skirts displaying their buskined shoes. . . . Now and again they made way for some young author whom they greeted, while the people of Paris eyed these privileged persons as they passed before them.

In the house the atmosphere was feverish. But people were not interested in the romantic costumes of the romantic literary set—they wanted to see *Antony*. The author, it was rumored, had actually copied nature!

Success was assured by the end of the first act. The audience recognized itself in these persons dressed in the style of 1831; it trembled with sympathy and breathlessly followed the events of the thoroughly bourgeois little adultery out of which Dumas had made a play of blood and iron. The handsome Bocage who played Antony filled the stage with his roarings. "Ask a corpse how many times he has lived!" . . . "Curses! I went to sleep with my hands on my dagger and I dreamed of the place of execution and the scaffold! . . ." And

in a box a young woman broke her fan and exclaimed "Ah! what a pagan he is!"

Dorval with her poignant, disturbing voice, "which seemed to vibrate with tears" as it stole into the heart, made the young people shudder. Her tones were from nature; her cries from the heart brought the house down. Her simple gestures, the way in which she untied the ribbons of her hat or threw herself into a chair, the tone with which she said "Oh, but I am ruined. I'm ruined!" everything got across. The young men would have blown their brains out for this gentle, virtuous woman, possessed by love. . . . And Mélanie, hidden away in a box, with tears in her eyes, heard those phrases which she had inspired and which sounded so strangely familiar.

Dumas did not come to see her. When he was recognized by the house, he was acclaimed, mobbed. The crowd hung on to him, tore away the skirts of his coat —a green coat buttoned from top to bottom—and so he went behind the scenes with a round jacket.

The success of *Antony* exceeded that of *Henri III*. It was the first modern romantic drama, a drama of revindication which proclaimed the rights of love, attacked the accepted ideas of marriage, and ended with an act of heroic delicacy—the lover killing his mistress and preferring to die himself rather than to compromise her! The effect "on this inflammable public, on this

volcanic youth," was prodigious; and all Young-France to prove worthy of its name, began to carry in its belt a dagger like Antony's, with the device, *Adesso e sempre* —Now and forever.

The artful Alexander had taken care to crown his work with a declaration of atheism. He spoke simply of giving over his life to the angel of evil, "and his soul . . . if he believed in a soul." This impious touch increased the excitement, as he had hoped. "The most obscene play that has ever appeared in these days of obscenity!" the classicists cried. His Parisian success penetrated to the provinces. At Marseilles *Antony* unloosed the battle; the romantics of La Cannebière who came off victorious, crowned the prompter's copy and, to celebrate the defeat of the classicists, carried a wig at the end of a pole as their trophy. At Vichy the play was performed in a barn, and when it was over the citizens said as they came out: "Heavens, what a filthy piece! And Madame X . . . actually took her daughter there! Well really, they got what they deserved." But the barn was crowded to the last seat.

Dumas had struck the right note. His play had one hundred and thirty consecutive performances, a figure unheard of at that time. Its success was undeniable. Later some of the conservative deputies threatened to refuse to vote the budget if the resumption of *Antony* at the Théâtre-Français was authorized. Thiers, who

was minister, reflected: "*Antony* and no budget, or a budget and no *Antony*." He did not hesitate—he forbade the play; but Alexander took his case to court, won his suit, and *Antony* appeared behind the footlights as lively as before. Casimir Delavigne sighed: "What that devil of a Dumas writes is poor stuff but it prevents their thinking my stuff good."

"Young Flaubert admired "this picture of love in five acts" unreservedly and he could hardly contain himself while listening to Dorval, whose drawling accent and rather thick intonation he ended by imitating. According to him the importance of *Antony* was enormous, and he was right. Dumas had created a living theater out of a closet theater; he had skillfully played with the literature of despair and made real "this satanic work," of which Goethe speaks, "with an incredible feeling for the truth, which keeps him from uttering an empty or a false word."

In the days when Alexander was posing as a republican hero, old Deviolaine said to him: "What grieves me, you see, is that with your character you'll die on a beggar's pallet like your father!" Dumas had a good laugh at this; now he was eating "with all the teeth of glory," he was lodged comfortably in a new house in the Square d'Orléans in the rue Saint-Lazare; and as he took a rather barbaric delight in everything

tawdry and gaudy, he displayed astonishing waistcoats, green as the sea, amaranthine-colored cloaks, and massive golden chains. . . . He chose this time, too, to close his accounts with the past.

He had already broken with Mélanie, but when she asked him to burn her letters, he answered in Antony's best vein: "No, I shall return them, but I shall not burn them. If I ever burned them, it would be to light the chafing-dish containing the charcoal with which I would asphyxiate myself." This love was the only love, the great love of Mélanie's life; she allowed people to speak to her of her faithless lover. She had no harsh feelings toward him and she recounted her sorrows in lyrics which she entitled "Poems of the Heart." He saw her again one day, by chance, at Marcélline Desbordes-Valmore's; she hid "her face, pale as a sheet of paper," beneath her hat. Then the storm passed. . . . They met again and a quiet intimacy was established between them. Mélanie's daughter played with Dumas' little son who made her a declaration of love, and Alexander rubbed his hands, crying "Bravo! I recognize my own blood. You are really my son."

Since he now had some money, he decided to acknowledge Catherine Lebaye's child, and he sometimes went to Passy to breathe the country air. He was rather a tender father. One day the child fell down the stairway and they looked for Dumas who came, breathlessly, in

his uniform of the National Guard and fainted when he saw that his son was hurt. They had to unbutton the coat of the military man to bring him to!

When the child was seven years old, Dumas decided to send him to boarding school, but Catherine was opposed to this. There was a painful scene and young Alexander hid under the bed from where his father had to drag him to take him to the Vauthier School in the rue de la Montagne-Saint-Geneviève. Catherine, after this separation, was unwilling to accept any further assistance and she became manager of the linen department in a school where she courageously earned her living.

Dumas, in the mood to set things in order, also acknowledged the daughter whom Bell Krebsamer had borne him on March 7, 1831. Everything was now cleared up. His old affairs of the heart were ended; he was ready to begin all over again.

And now began that curious life in which work, love, gastronomy, travel, festivals, financial speculations, dazzling successes and heavy failures, splendor and misery, were inextricably mixed—the life which, with few variations, he was to lead to the very end.

During the summer of 1831 Dumas with Bell had discovered Trouville and while taking down the culinary recipes of Mother Oseraie, the innkeeper, he wrote a tragedy in verse, in five acts, called *Charles VII chez*

ses Grands Vassaux. It was to reëstablish his literary dignity among his contemporaries. When he returned to Paris, he submitted his work to Vigny, since "some objections to its style" had been made. He attended the first night of *Marion de Lorme,* where he startled the public by his exclamations and gesticulations, and he kept running to the Odéon to watch over his *Charles VII.* . . . But as Musset—that crown of thorns whom Alexander admired but did not love—remarked of the play: "You can announce on a poster that a play is a tragedy; but it's another thing to make people believe it." The success of *Charles VII* was slight, the house was cold.

The night of the opening Dumas returned to his house in the Square d'Orléans, holding his son by the hand, the child "trotting along to keep in step with his father's long legs." Together they went past the old walls of the rue de Seine, near the Institute, and their silhouettes, the one gigantic, the other very tiny, stood out on the damp wall, lighted by the moon's rays. Dumas was troubled that evening, Dumas admitted to himself that "he lacked a sense of style."

But his spirits rebounded quickly. If he couldn't succeed with tragedies in verse, why should that hold him back! He returned to the satanic genre, and wrote *Teresa,* a strong piece with a double adultery. Bocage had just discovered an actress who would play the

part of the heroine admirably—"A young girl now at Montmartre who has a great deal of talent." Dumas went to see this pearl lost in the suburbs, and Ida Ferrier appeared—a small woman, decidedly plump but with a delicate talent, charming, very sincere, and free from all theatrical conventions. She would be a wonderful Teresa. As a matter of fact the play was performed amid cheers, while Ida threw herself into Dumas' arms exclaiming: "Ah, Monsieur, you have just done me the greatest service. You have established my reputation as an actress, poor little me! I shall owe you my future." Dumas answered as he always answered on such occasions—he took his heroine to supper. Bell Krebsamer was forgotten. . . .

At the beginning of 1832, the cholera, brought from Asia by way of London, was raging in Paris. From his window in the rue Saint-Lazare Alexander every day saw fifty or sixty convoys of ammunition wagons loaded with coffins going toward the cemetery of Montmartre; and in this funereal state of mind he wrote a comedy entitled *Le Mari de la Veuve.*

Then, on April 15, just as he was accompanying to the stairway Liszt, the pianist, and Boulanger, the painter, who had been drinking black tea with him to fortify themselves against the disease, he felt his legs

give way. There was a blinding flash in his eyes and a shivering sensation in his skin. He had the plague. Fortunately for him, that night during his fever he swallowed half a bottle of ether which had inadvertently been left on the table. It seemed to him that he had swallowed "the sword of the angel of extermination," but it saved his life. His servant, the faithful Catherine, rubbed him and roasted him with a hot warming pan . . . and, thanks to this simple Negro remedy, he grew well.

When he took his first steps out of doors, he found Paris agitated and uneasy. The struggle of the republicans against Louis Philippe continued with more violence than ever, and the slightest incident brought on a riot. Alexander, weak as he was, went to see his friends Cavaignac and Arago who told him of the insurrection at hand. General Lemarque, a Deputy of the opposition party, had just died, and his funeral obsequies supplied the occasion to overthrow the July Monarchy.

On June 5, 1832, accordingly, all the revolutionary forces, mobilized as if by magic, followed the convoy shouting "Honor to General Lamarque!" Alexander naturally could not stay at home. He was there in his uniform of the National Guard, and as he passed, some of the men in the crowd pressed his left hand—his right held his saber—and murmured, "Let the Guard have no fear, we are here." The air was heavy; great black

clouds hung in the sky; it needed only a spark and the city would be on fire.

At the bridge of Austerlitz, the ringleaders gave the signal and an hour later half Paris was in the hands of the insurgents. Dumas rejoiced to feel again the spirit of 1830, but he was less aggressive and contented himself with saving the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin by handing over to the rioters the weapons in the property-storerooms.

"It is I, M. Alexander Dumas, who lends you these arms," he exclaimed. "From those who are killed, I shall demand nothing; but those who survive will restore their arms here. Is it agreed? On your word of honor!"

They applauded him, as was his due. Then he went up to Mlle. George who implored him to take off his compromising uniform, and, putting on civilian clothes again, he returned to the Square d'Orléans where he arrived so exhausted that he fainted away on the landing.

The insurrection failed and the repressive measures were harsh. On June 9, 1832, a legitimist newspaper announced that Dumas, taken with weapon in hand, had been shot; and Nodier wrote to his friend: "I have just read that you were shot yesterday at three o'clock in the morning. Be good enough to let me know whether that will prevent your coming to the Arsenal tomorrow

to dine with Taylor." Alexander went, to give Nodier "news of the other world," but he knew that he was marked by the police as "a republican in the full meaning of the term." One morning an aide-de-camp from the Tuileries actually did come to warn him that there was some talk of arresting him and that he would be wise to spend a month or two abroad. At the same time his physician was advising a change of air.

So politics and hygiene prevailed on him to expatriate himself; and as he had never seen any high mountains, he started off for Switzerland on July 21, 1832.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH ALEXANDER EXPANDS

He enjoyed his journey exceedingly. In the Rhone valley he went trout-fishing with pruning-bill and lantern, a wonderful sport; he ate bear's meat and his host obligingly informed him that this particular bear had devoured half of the hunter who had attacked him, which rather disturbed Alexander's digestion. By his gift of good fellowship he made friends with the guides of Mont-Blanc and with them scaled several crags, "which waggled like teeth that are about to fall out." In the morning he used to start out, cheerful and nimble, his gun over his shoulder as at Villers-Cotterets, and "hunt for his breakfast." At the inn he was proud of the omelets which he prepared himself and served to the ladies, and prouder still when the ladies learned that the cook was the author of *Antony*.

Next he went to Lucerne to pay a visit to Châteaubriand whom he had met in days gone by in David d'Angers' studio. The master was weary and disillusioned, but friendly; and Dumas, who had a strong sense of veneration, was deeply moved in seeing the

hand that had written *Le Génie du Christianisme* "throw bread to the marsh hens on the lake." When he went to Reichenau, he stopped in the little Louis XV room, adorned with golden arabesques, where the erstwhile Duke of Chartres—now Louis Philippe I, King of France—had led the obscure life of an exile and taught little children drawing. As Dumas had neither rancor nor consistency in his opinions, he grew sentimental over the misfortunes of this prince whom a month before he had fought in the streets of Paris.

Finally, to crown his journey, he paid his respects to Queen Hortense, daughter of the Empress Josephine, at the Château d'Arenenberg. There he suddenly fell under the spell of the Bonapartist atmosphere. He forgot how badly the Emperor had acted toward his father, and spoke only of the hero who had cast the seeds of revolution abroad through Belgium, Poland, Italy, and Germany. As the Queen seemed troubled about the fate of her son, Louis Napoleon—the future Napoleon III—Dumas gave her this remarkable piece of advice: "I should tell your son to secure the remission of his exile, buy an estate in France, have himself elected deputy, try by his influence to get control of the majority of the Chamber of Deputies, and by this means depose Louis Philippe and have himself elected in his place."

"Ah," sighed the Queen, "how I wish that my son were here and could hear what you have just said.'

Alexander could not easily restrain himself. As he wandered over the world he began to see that Dumas was never bored provided only that Dumas was present. He was not in the least indifferent to new landscapes, but what he really liked was seeing himself there. He acted his own comedy on his own stage, which constantly shifted, and he enjoyed himself hugely while playing his part. Then, when he began to note down his impressions in his scrapbook, he discovered in himself, as he says with happy sincerity, a natural liveliness in narration—still another gift not to be neglected, another charm in life.

On his return, he had the disagreeable experience of finding his public ill-disposed toward him. One of his plays, *Le Fils de l'Emigré,* had been shamefully hissed and the critics accused the immoral author of prostituting his talent. Alexander realized that he must change his course, abandon the artifice of the theater and, while awaiting better days, take up literature. He went to Buloz, manager of *La Revue des Deux Mondes.*

Buloz, Dumas tells us, was a man of pale complexion, scanty beard, yellowish hair, and undecided features, taciturn, almost gloomy, and not inclined to answer because of increasing deafness. But he had a genius for discovering talent and editing a review. Gifted with

finesse but devoid of charm and fluency, he followed undisturbed the line which he had marked out for himself.

Alexander in 1831 had brought him a novel, *La Rose Rouge,* which he declared had never been published, and then said that it had already appeared under another title. But Buloz did not seem to remember this trifling deception and when Dumas proposed to write some historical articles for his review, he accepted.

The journey to Switzerland had been expensive and times were hard for a man who, always open-handed, did not know the meaning of that villainous word, economy. The restaurant-keeper of the rue de l'Université, with whom Dumas had made the brilliant arrangement of "board for a year," had played him the nasty trick of failing in business; and Alexander now took his meals in a cabaret in the rue de Tournon, connected with the Hotel of the Emperor Joseph II, where a dish cost six *sous*. Expensive amusements were out of the question—it was an excellent time to work.

Pen in hand, he set himself to reading works of history, cutting out incidents which might supply a subject for drama; but he soon realized that everything was unrelated in his mind, that the connecting thread was missing. Clearly the school of Villers-Cotterets, the lessons of the Abbé Grégoire, his education at three francs a month, and even the advice of his old office

friend, Lassagne, were not enough. Once again he had to return to the beginner's textbook.

The day on which Dumas acquired *L'Histoire de France en Vers,* a work of the Abbé Gauthier, revised and corrected by M. de Moyencourt, was a great day in his life. From the beginning,

Clodion prend Cambrai, puis règne Mérovée;
De la fureur des Huns Lutèce est préservée,

to the end,

Philippe d'Orléans, tiré de son palais,
Succède á Charles X par le voeu des Français,

he assimilated the whole substantial volume and derived great satisfaction from it. Just the same it was a bit dry. Why not go back to original sources? From Sidoine Appollinaire to Tallemant des Réaux a noble lineage of chroniclers presented themselves to him; and with new ardor Alexander resumed his notes. He was in ecstasy, enchanted. What a wonderful journey into the past! He traveled through ancient France as he had just traveled through Switzerland, talking with the people, dressing like them, sharing their joys and sorrows. The world of other days, at his approach, lived again with a warmth of life and an intensity of color which overwhelmed him. He did not suspect for a moment that he drew this warmth and this color from his own inner self.

The sketches from the Middle Ages which he published did not fail to please, but he thought it necessary to prove to his contemporaries that he could treat his subjects in higher vein; and so, after he had conscientiously plundered the *Etudes Historiques* of Châteaubriand and the books of Augustin Thierry, he wrote *Gaule et France,* a fascinating panorama rich in unexpected views and with its horizon bathed in a mist of prophecy. The people, he said, wished to share in the national life, and the monarchy one day or another would be forced to grant universal suffrage. Then the government of the future, the republic, would be established.

Politicians sneered at him, the learned scorned him, but Augustin Thierry declared himself satisfied: "There is in M. Dumas' work," he wrote to Buloz, "boldness, warmth, poetry, and much intelligence; and I am very proud of the fact that he has ventured to use our German roots with me." For, as one might expect, Alexander had not failed to write Chlode-Hilde instead of Clotilde.

So the author of *Antony* showed a new phase of his character—from the satanic he passed to the philosophical. He had money again, times were better. He was thirty years old and once more he stepped into the gay life.

His talent for sociability was such that he made himself at home in the most varied circles. As he never gave up old friends and constantly attracted new ones, his following became imposing. In his hours of chatting or idleness, he held forth as the representative of a romanticism at once violent and good-natured—or, to put it more simply, as a most extraordinary story-teller.

The Arsenal where he had begun his conquest of Paris continued to be his favorite salon; and with his natural redundance he said to Nodier, "I venerate you as my master, I love you as a brother, and I respect you as a son." Nodier, too, kept his old partiality for Dumas. His Alexander had never deceived him like some of the others and the only thing he reproached him with was his lack of taste. When he saw Dumas arriving in his appalling clothes, green or red, and covered with trinkets, chains and rings, he would sigh: "Ah, Dumas, my poor fellow, what a lot of baubles! Will you Negroes always be the same and forever be delighted by glass beads and corals?"

Dumas did not take offense. He loved to see again, in the red cashmere salon, the people who had received him so kindly when he was unknown and who were still so friendly toward him. There was one change, for by the side of Marie Nodier's son—she had become Madame Menessier—there was now another child who

accompanied the piano by beating the drum. It was young Dumas, his son.

At the Café de Paris, on the boulevard, Alexander breathed the air of the great world. There the celebrities of journalism, literature, and dandyism met. That man with the warlike hat and blinking eyes is Nestor Roqueplan who has now left his garret, his washbasin-clock and his pistols-candelabra for the comfortable offices of the *Figaro*. Next him is Jules Janin, who looks comfortably rotund but thinks only of snapping at his neighbor, and who will later fight a duel with Dumas about a wretched question of dramatic criticism. That fellow by way of being a gentleman, dressed with the correctness of an English lord in a blue coat with gold buttons, a yellow waistcoat, and pearl-gray trousers, is the husband of Marie Dorval, Merle, one of the legitimist party, an epicure and an authority on gastronomy . . . Over at the long table, orating in a high voice, with his face awkwardly swathed in an enormous neck-cloth to hide certain unpleasant scars, is Véron, nicknamed the Prince of Wales, actually the manager of the *Revue de Paris*, who pays Dumas royally, at least for the time being. With his high color, his greedy lips that look as if they were smeared with jam, and his gluttonous eyes, he seems at once an abbot of former times and a comedy valet.

That tall, thin, dark man, with hair cut brush-shaped

and a prominent nose, wearing a velvet caftan and a cap lined with martin fur, is Adolphe de Leuven, librettist of the *Postillon de Lonjumeau,* who launched Alexander. By his side, flaunting a magnificent kidskin waistcoat and whirling his rhinoceros cane, is handsome Roger de Beauvoir, with a mop of curly black hair, the only one of Alexander's friends who is an aristocrat of wealth—Beauvoir who entertains six hundred people at the Hôtel de Pimodan, and who has just challenged Balzac for accusing him of being named neither Roger nor Beauvoir. Although Balzac took the trouble to send him "forty pages of excuses," the dandy will listen to nothing and proclaims: "I scorn M. de Balzac's prose, I want only his skin!"

Here is Eugène Sue, very smart in his sea-green coat, with a rather vulgar turn of the nose that detracts from his good looks. Last, simpler and jollier than the rest, is that good fellow Méry who passes for a librarian at Marseilles, but who is always off on a lark to Paris; an amazing improviser who can compose correctly an act of a classical tragedy within two hours, and in the drawing-rooms describe the tortures of hell so vividly that the ladies beg for mercy.

Near these gentlemen, but on a lower plane, the madmen appear. "He who was Gannot" and has made himself God under the name Mapah, is a fop and a billiard player now fallen on evil days who sends out mani-

festos signed "By Our Apostolic Ruin." Jean Journet, called the Apostle, goes about dressed as a begging friar and sells his verses unfailingly entitled "Songs" or "Cries." Poor Petrus Borel imagines himself to be a wolf; at his house Alexander has eaten cream from a skull. . . .

This whole group, drunk with lyric poetry and art, asserts, vociferates, declaims, and anathematizes; Dumas plays his part in the concert. It was still the heroic age of romanticism when, as tall, crabbed Philarète Chasles avowed, all life was sprouting, budding, bursting forth at once, when the very air made one drunk and the flowers exhaled vertiginous perfumes.

Although he had neither the affectations nor the conceit of a dandy, Alexander figured among the lions of the day. No regular festival came off without him. This chap Dumas, "always crazy, always excellent," was the stage manager, the indispensable source of amusement. At the house of Amaury Duval's sister he appeared as a greased pole and was addressed by Méry, dressed as a village mayor; or you might see him in the rue Grange-Batelière, in the salon of the dancer Marie Taglioni, "the sylph of sylphs," or at Delphine de Girardin's on the days when she recited her poems. But Alexander always grew sentimental near "the Muse" and asked her to receive him in private. "I love you," he said, "with an affection too selfish to share you with

the world." Then, when they were alone together, she would interrupt him with questions about dramatic art. "Do tell me how one writes for the theater?" Dumas laughed at what he called "the naïveté of genius."

He was attractive to women, there was no doubt of that, even to the most distrustful of them. When Sainte-Beuve, who was fond of playing the rôle of intermediary, proposed to introduce Alfred de Musset to George Sand, she answered: "I don't want you to bring Alfred de Musset. He's too much of a dandy, we should never get along together. . . . Instead of him, do bring Alexander Dumas, in whose art I have found a soul, exclusive of his talent." Alexander came and Sand took a great liking to him.

The carnival of 1833 was an event in Paris, thanks to Dumas who gave a costume-ball the like of which had never been seen before.

Next to his apartment in the rue Saint-Lazare he had discovered an empty lodging which he at once handed over to his friends, the artists Louis and Clément Boulanger, Jadin, the painter of flowers, Decamps, Granville, the two Johannots, Célestin Nanteuil, and the decorator Cicéri. . . . Within a few hours and without taking off the little black coat that seemed glued to his body, Delacroix painted King Roderick crossing the battlefield after the disaster of Guadalete:

Dans une sombre attitude,
Mort de soif, de lassitude,
Le roi sans royaume allait . . .[1]

The paintings were scarcely dry when invitations were sent out.

Alexander, dressed as a sixteenth century Italian, and Ida Ferrier as the wife of Rubens, as abundant as one could wish, did the honors, and All-Paris passed before them—legitimists, republicans, and Orléanists, academicians and pamphleteers, actresses and men of letters. Never had a Mæcenas given proof of eclecticism like this. Dumas enjoyed himself as much as his guests, kissed the ladies, arranged the couples, poured out champagne, and kept the whole thing going . . . and at daybreak the Parisians saw an astonishing farandole dance down to the boulevard, made up of Delacroix as Dante, Musset as Paillasse, Rossini as Figaro, and Barye as a Bengal tiger.

Hugo did not attend the ball in the rue Saint-Lazare; he had almost completely broken with Dumas. But the latter preserved all his old admiration and contented himself with criticizing the lack of unity in dramatic interest in his old friend's work. "Let's get out quickly," he said at the end of a performance of *Hernani,* "it

[1] In a somber attitude,
Dead with thirst and lassitude,
The king without a kingdom went . . .

might begin all over again." Hugo was more bitter in his comments. He could not forgive Dumas—this backwoodsman who had alighted unexpectedly in Paris and possessed only facility, not genius—for having passed ahead of him in his career and for continuing to attract the crowd. His pride which, as Liszt said, made any true friendship and any form of intimacy impossible, had been wounded. He could not bear to admit that he was not the only one "who held the political world in one hand and the literary world in the other."

On November 1, 1833, five days before the production of *Marie Tudor*, which had been unmistakably inspired by *Christine*, there appeared in *Les Débats* a violent article accusing Dumas of having plundered Goethe, Schiller, Walter Scott, and Lope de Vega, and of having pillaged Wallenstein, Egmont, and Hernani. The article was signed Granier de Cassagnac, a journalist who, as every one knew, had been introduced to *Les Débats* by Hugo. The latter, foreseeing an attack on himself, had taken the offensive. Collusion was obvious and the maneuver was skillful.

Desbordes-Valmore, proofreader on *Les Débats*, brought the article to Dumas who fell from the clouds when he ran through the proofs revised by Hugo himself. "My dear Hugo," he wrote, "I'm told that you corrected the proofs of the abominable article on me by G. de C. Is this true? I should never have

allowed, especially on the eve of a performance of one of my plays, an article to appear in a journal where I had the influence that you have on *Les Débats* against, I won't say my rival, but against my friend." Then he signed it: "Always yours and in spite of all."

Hugo answered in a jocular tone—he was even more to blame than was thought, because he had read the article . . . to soften some expressions that were too severe; Dumas really ought to thank him. Later he tried to explain that the offending article, held over, had somehow got printed one day when copy was needed; but no one was deceived. Sainte-Beuve cautiously deplored this scandalous breach which hurt the cause of poetry. But most of the writers, with Vigny at their head, took sides with Dumas; and comments like this appeared in the newspapers: "Does M. Hugo really believe that in letting loose the dogs of letters over whom he disposes on such a rival—does he really believe that he can destroy a reputation that annoys him?"

Alexander, for his part, contented himself with saying: "All that doesn't alter the fact that when the Théâtre-Français saw that danger threatened its house, it said to me, Dumas, 'Sauvez-nous!' ('Save us!') and to the other fellow, 'Sauvez-vous!' ('Get away!')." He never nursed his grievances, and soon after he astonished a contributor to *Les Débats* by

proclaiming his admiration of *Marion de Lorme*. "Well, really, that's a good one!" exclaimed the journalist. "What is?" asked Dumas. "That you should praise Victor Hugo."

Time passed. Dumas had forgotten the quarrel and goodnaturedly went to ask Casimir Delavigne to vote for Hugo who was seeking a chair in the Academy. Delavigne vehemently refused, swearing that he would gladly vote for Dumas, but never for the author of *Hernani*. A few months later Alexander met in the corridor of the Théâtre-Français, old Népomucène Lemercier, who was storming against romanticism, and said to him: "M. Lemercier, you have refused your vote to Victor Hugo; but there's one thing that you'll have to give him one day or another, and that's your place. Take care that in return for all the ill you've said of him here he won't be obliged to speak well of you at the Academy." And everything happened just as he had said. Hugo succeeded Lemercier under the dome of the Academy in 1840.

By this time, too, a reconciliation had been brought about. Madame Hugo had invited Alexander to Fourqueux, a village at the gates of Saint-Germain; and there the two writers, "whose dawn had been intermingled," drank to their mutual success.

In an essay on Mirabeau, Hugo wrote: "Barnave had as his own the ovation of the moment, the triumph of the passing quarter of an hour, and glory in the newspapers. . . . He was one of those men . . . who always humbly kiss the heel of success, whose talk is well leveled down, well trimmed, and very smooth, so that on it all the common ideas of their time with their varied luggage travel and circulate privately. He was one of those who incessantly set their opinion in the street just as they set a thermometer in their window."

Barnave is meant for Dumas; and in spite of the desire to belittle him, the portrait is not wholly unjust. Alexander did not appear as a man of reason or of consistency, whose development one could foretell; he did not pursue a purpose, he let himself follow the impression of the moment, the wind which blew where it listed; he did it instinctively, without regard to his own interests. He lacked prudence and foresight, very different from Hugo who was so careful of his glory. Possessed by his imagination which was rightly his genius, he never knew the labor of reflecting, of finishing off, and of pruning; but he remained unequalled in bringing into play and into action the ideas that float in the air.

Goethe, who interested himself in Dumas' beginnings, recommended moderation to the young savage, saying: "Don't go beyond your masters. Be careful not to exag-

gerate your activity; all activity without rest results in bankruptcy . . . Art must be the guide of the imagination if it is to be transformed into poetry. There is nothing more terrible than imagination devoid of taste." This lofty wisdom Alexander could not grasp. His element was action, unrestrained and joyful; and his life continued to unroll like a varied, checkered spectacle where one picture follows another hit or miss.

A certain Gaillardet had written a play, *La Tour de Nesles,* so badly constructed that it was not actable; Jules Janin tried to patch it up without success; then it was taken to Dumas who made a superb melodrama of it. Gaillardet might threaten to start a suit and fight a duel with him at Saint-Mandé—it mattered little. The author was Dumas who, at a time when people spoke only of social rights, created Buridan the democrat, Buridan, herald of the people, who said to Queen Marguerite, a shameless queen of the ancient régime: "I shall speak to you standing and uncovered, Marguerite, because you are a woman and not because you are queen!" At one stroke, Dumas had touched the popular affections, and when he confided to Thiers, "The sort of literature that I produce is played better on the boulevards than at the Théâtre-Français," he was expressing a great truth.

He had the same experience with *Kean,* a play by Théaulon, so feeble that Dumas was called in to give

it a tonic. With one turn of his wrist he set right the story of this drunken actor who was a genius; and the play was performed amidst riotous applause, while Frédérick Lemaître, who played his part naturally, that is to say absolutely drunk, called out to Dumas who was seated in front, "Eh, young man! you've done the trick!"

When once a play was finished and produced, Dumas was no longer interested. So he started for the south of France with Jadin, the flower painter. He fled the cities of machinery, because the insensibility of machines was repugnant to him; discovered the wine of Saint-Péray in going down the Rhone Valley; slept at Avignon in the very room of the Hôtel du Palais Royal where Marshal Brune, his father's friend, had been assassinated; made a bargain with the municipality of Cavaillon to supply him with melons in exchange for which he would give all his works that had appeared or that would appear; and tried to follow Châteaubriand's example one night in the arena at Nîmes and "reconstruct in thought this ruined monument and the society that had passed." Then, all of a sudden, in the church of Baux, he is quite carried away by a little saint of worm-eaten wood, so carried away that he carries away the statue and leaves in its place a ten-franc piece . . . and that evening, at Arles, consumed by remorse, he makes his prayers before the stolen saint.

Such were the accesses of mysticism which sometimes seized the author of *Antony*, who would deliver to the angel of evil his soul, if he believed in one; but the fit did not last long. Dumas fell to earth again and grew expansive in listening to the story of "la chasse au chastre" at Marseilles, or the tale of the village of Cuges which had no water, or in telling these stories again himself with an extraordinary accent. Then he went from Toulon, where he met a convict, formerly a footman of Mlle. Mars who had appropriated his mistress's jewels, to Genoa. There King Charles-Albert of Sardinia politely requested him to leave his country by way of the sea because Alexander was under political surveillance.

So be it, according to your good pleasure! thought Dumas, and disembarked at Naples which enchanted him. As he knew that he was under espionage, he traveled under the name Guichard, enjoying the inns, hunting trips in the mountains and in the midst of ruins, brigands and carbines, phantoms of Fra Diavolo. . . . On arriving in Rome he was received by Pope Gregory XVI, to whom he extolled the merits of Christian Romanticism. The pope, in return, bestowed upon him two or three rosaries, as many little crucifixes of wood and mother-of-pearl from the Holy Land, and finally his benediction. It was a delightful journey, full of life and color, but suddenly at Civita-Castellana the coun-

terfeit Guichard was arrested and conducted to the frontiers of Tuscany by two police agents who charitably warned him that he would be liable for five years in the galleys if he again set foot in the papal states. Alexander had been denounced from Paris as a member of the Polish Committee, author of revolutionary plays, and agent charged with revolutionizing Rome.

They were on the wrong track for he was thinking only of revolutionizing Paris by a new drama, a drama of ancient days, *Caligula,* which he had written for Ida Ferrier. She was still his official mistress and Alexander still devoted his special attentions to her. He who prided himself on differing from Meyerbeer "who took more pains to work up a success than to work up his scores," and on never having danced attendance in an editorial office to get a line of publicity for himself, now wore out the critics, even the least of them, by asking for favorable comments on Mlle. Ida. For her he demanded splendid engagements, forced her on the Comédie-Française, and thanked obscure journalists for the good assistance they had rendered his friend. The repertory of Dumas was managed by the firm of Ida Ferrier. His friends laughed at him and declared that little Ida, the fattest woman of her day, was ruining her lover and sending his literary stock below par. . . . Alexander let them talk on.

In spite of the appearance in it of a trained horse of

which much was anticipated, *Caligula* failed amid hisses. Ida, in the rôle of a virgin saint, was so plump "that she introduced callipyginous martyrdom"; and on the boulevards it was the fashion to say, "You caligulate me" instead of "You make me tired."

Alexander had better have meditated on Goethe's wise counsel.

CHAPTER VI

BOHEMIA

ROMANTICISM was falling into a decline. The sacred battalions which had fought at the first nights of *Henri III* and of *Hernani* had dispersed, the troops were deserting. Marie Dorval, interpreter of the great days, left the Théâtre-Français and was replaced by a little Jewess, daughter of a dealer in second-hand clothes, who was to revive the classical repertory—Rachel. The public, wearied of excess, disorder, and violence, was finding a new charm in measure and in rules.

Musset one day imagined *La Revue des Deux Mondes* in ruin, and wrote:

Dumas meurt en voyage
Faute d' impressions;
Chez les filles de joie
Musset s'est abruti . . .[1]

[1] Dumas is passing away on his travels
For want of impressions;
Among women of pleasure
Musset has stupefied himself.

Musset had really stupefied himself. Dumas though still living was hard hit. He was collecting failures. His *Don Juan* had been severely handled by the critics, notably by Gustave Planche, a rawboned journalist, "a ragged, unendurably filthy rascal," who declared that he saw in this fantastic play only a storeroom where Dumas had collected all the chests, all the porcelains, and all the armor picked up among the dealers in antiques along the Quai Voltaire and the Quai Malaquais. Its effects were mechanical, without an ounce of poetry or style. Lassailly, a kind of lunatic who in the past had fought in the front ranks of romanticism, now attacked the author of *Henri III,* who had never in his judgment been nursed "in the great nest of Shakespeare, eagle of the mountains."

Dumas, exasperated by his failures, hurled vituperation at the new theater and at the *Cléopâtre* of M. de Saint-Félix which was all nobility and kindness. "Now I! I would have shown up Antony, that bawler!" he exclaimed; but whether he liked it or not, he was going out of fashion, and when he invoked the inalienable rights of art, the manager of the Porte-Saint-Martin, Harel, replied: "The literary drama brought me into debt; the well-made drama has put me on my feet again."

Alexander had occupied the stage too much and so people were hard on him. "He's a broken man, a rope

dancer, and worse still, a man without talent," wrote Balzac, who never forgave Dumas for siding against him in a difference with Buloz. Alexander for his part thought Balzac's productions painful, but expressed his opinion more gently: "I'm not acquainted with him as a man and what I know of him isn't in the least sympathetic to me; as a literary talent, his way of composing, creating, and producing is so different from my own that I am a poor judge of his accomplishment."

When they met at the Hôtel des Haricots—the guardroom of the National Guard—or in the literary salons, they did not exchange a word; but one day Balzac, in passing before Dumas, said, "When I'm used up, I shall write plays." "Better begin at once, then," retorted Alexander.

Now that he felt the hostility of his confrères and the indifference of the public, Dumas wished to prove to himself that he was a man of importance and to take his place in the literary hierarchy. He began to dream of the Academy and paid a formal visit to old Michaud, former editor of *La Quotidienne,* at his house in Passy. "M. Michaud, I am presenting myself as a candidate for Parseval de Grandmaison's chair, and I request your vote." "So soon?" said the old man whose colleague had been buried that very day, "then you have come with the hearse?"

Alexander perceived that he lacked tact in this sort

of transaction, but his desire to distinguish himself in the commonwealth of letters remained keen as before; and when it was announced, on the occasion of the marriage of the king's oldest son, the Duke of Orléans, that there would be a promotion to the Legion of Honor, he intrigued for the honor of being named chevalier. Louis Philippe, still rancorous since their rupture, removed his name from the list of candidates; but Victor Hugo, who was in favor at court, intervened with the Duke of Orléans. Dumas' name was restored and on July 2, 1837, the "big schoolboy" was allowed to make his bow before the king in the drawing-rooms of Versailles.

He enjoyed this favor to the full and displayed his brand-new red ribbon on the boulevards and at the Café de Paris. He had made his peace with those in power and though in private he still proclaimed himself a republican, he conceded some merits to Louis Philippe's government. Nodier was right—Dumas adored baubles and from now on he worked hard to replace his watch chains and trinkets with decorations. The Belgian Cross, the Order of Isabella the Catholic, of Gustavus Vasa, and of Saint John of Jerusalem, the Great Cross of Saint Louis of Lucques which cost him two hundred francs, and the Nicham . . . all these were successively spread across his chest; and at such times

he truly resembled the potentates who had ruled at San Domingo over the little slave, Césette Dumas.

On August 1, 1838, his mother died. Alexander was deeply grieved, and when the Duke of Orléans came to offer his condolences, he cried like a child with his head leaning against the knees of the prince. For a moment his spirit dwelt on the past; he asked himself whether he had always acted as a reverent son toward his parents; and his reflections resulted in a great project. He would have a statue erected in Haiti in honor of his father. He wrote a beautiful letter on the subject to the loyal Haitians, proposing a subscription of one franc each from colored men only, wherever they lived. To this subscription no one else would be allowed to contribute except the King of France, the French princes, and the government of Haiti. But the plan was altogether too noble and too delicate to succeed. There was no response.

Thereupon Alexander remembered that he had a son at boarding-school and decided, in order to give himself the air of a family man, to take the boy with him. Young Alexander unregretfully left the Saint-Victor School (now on the site of the Casino de Paris), where he had been interned since leaving the Vauthier School; and his joy was complete when his father announced that he would take him along on a journey. On the spot Dumas rushed into the shops to renew his son's ward-

robe; then, when all was ready, he went off alone . . . with Ida; and young Alexander was only too happy to enjoy again the devotion of good Catherine Lebay.

The wind had turned, carrying Dumas toward Germanic lands. "The kings desired to see him," he was told, and he ran to them. He made the grand tour, showed off in Belgium at the Jubilee of Malines, and arrived in Frankfort, where he had agreed to meet Gérard de Nerval.

This charming spirit, an aerial creature always halfway between reality and dreams, got on very well with the fantastic Dumas. They had been fellow-workers in the past on *Le Monde Dramatique,* had written a libretto, *Piquillo,* for the Opéra-Comique, and were now thinking of exploiting a new vein, that of German literature whose wealth Nerval knew. They would compose two plays, the one inspired by the poet Kotzebue's assassination by the student Sand, a political, liberal drama; the other alchemical, with an accompaniment of crucibles and the philosopher's stone . . . and they would date them from Frankfort. It would be wonderful publicity.

But Nerval remained invisible. While awaiting him, Dumas led a jolly life, exhibited himself with Ida at promenades, suppers, and receptions, and made a sen-

sational entrance at the theater in M. de Rothschild's box. As every one got up to see him and the actors turned toward him while declaiming, he was in heaven. Finally Nerval's absence was explained. From Strassburg, where he had no more than a franc in his pocket to dine at the Hotel of the Raven, he had gone to Baden-Baden to sleep at the Hotel of the Sun. But there he was stopped by lack of funds and he wrote:

Et je repars, pleurant mon destin sans pareil,
De l' hôtel du Corbeau pour l' hôtel du Soleil . . .[1]

When they were once more united, the two friends set to work but Dumas, as "a tireless traveler and a faithful historian," wanted to study his documents on the spot. They visited Heidelberg and Mannheim, saw the place where the student Sand had been executed, trod the ground "where flowed the blood in which his comrades came to dip their handkerchiefs," and had the good luck to meet the headsman who showed them the scimitar-shaped saber which had served "to pluck off" the head of the condemned man and the wood of the scaffold "which was now used for the trellis of an arbor festooned with vines." Nerval took delight in these contrasts and dreamed of the poetry that he might instill into his drama. Dumas revelled in the

[1] And I start forth, bewailing my strange destiny,
From the Hotel of the Raven to the Hotel of the Sun . . .

past and thought of the rôle which he would write for Ida.

L'Alchimiste was finished first but had only a modest success at Paris. The German flavor did not catch the public taste.

Indefatigable, Alexander made a complete turn and with *Mlle de Belle-Isle*, a French comedy in the manner of the eighteenth century, he once more marched toward fortune. By the same turn his ambitions revived and he wrote to Buloz: "Do speak in behalf of my entrance into the Academy in your review, and ask yourself how it happens that I am not in its ranks when A(ncelot) is a candidate." Buloz might well ask himself that; and Dumas kept up the fight.

These checks weighed upon his spirits. He sought a new way to fame and formed immense projects in his mind—to write a military, religious, philosophic, moral, and poetic history of the peoples that had successively ruled on the Mediterranean border. But for that he needed leisure and calm. At Paris it was impossible; the women left him no time to work. Ah! if he had only Ida to consider!

Then the thought came to him to transform his life, to settle down; and he recalled the advice given him by the Duchess of Abrantès before her death. Deserted by her former lovers and her former connections, dispossessed and past fifty, she had become interested in

Dumas, who from time to time came to keep her company. She told him her troubles, submitted her work to his judgment, and tried to make him profit by her experience. He was her confidant, her son; she grew tender in seeing him with Ida, his beautiful young sweetheart, and said to him: "I should like very much to have her be more to you than she is."

Dumas still heard these words, but he hesitated. He had, to be sure, lived with Ida for seven years, now in the rue Bleu, now in the rue de Rivoli; and their union had continued without serious jars. His mistress was easygoing, although a bit selfish and suspicious; after all, why not make the union regular, settle down, and live a proper life?

The story goes that two reasons finally forced him to decide. Ida's guardian, a dung-farmer, it appears, who wished to assure his ward's future, bought up 200,000 francs worth of Dumas' debts for 40,000 francs, and, accompanied by the sheriff's officers, summoned the great man to marry or go to Clichy, the debtors' prison. One argument! An indiscretion was the second. Dumas took Ida to a ball given by the Duke of Orléans and presented her to the prince. "Of course it's quite understood, my dear Dumas," said the latter, "that you could present only your wife to me."

The marriage took place on February 5, 1840, in the chapel of the Chamber of Peers. The witnesses were

Roger de Beauvoir and Châteaubriand. The latter, accustomed to bless fallen royalty, now blessed the bride with the abundant bosom, remarking to Beauvoir, "It's my unchanging destiny, you see; and at this moment once again all that I bless falls."

A few weeks later, the household was installed at Florence in the Via Rondinelli. Ida expanded in a drawing-room filled with Camellias and jasmine; Alexander worked on a play which he had promised to Buloz, now Commissary of the King at the Théâtre-Français. He would have greatly preferred to find a subject for a drama, but as no inspiration came to him, he fell back on comedy in the manner of the eighteenth century. He had won success in this form once before, and besides, he preserved a fondness for the era of Faublas.

He worked, however, without joy. Comedy did not suit him. "You write comedy extraordinarily well," an actor said to him, politely. "Do you say that because I've always written dramas and tragedies?" he replied, almost grumblingly. But now he had to force his talent —there were debts to pay and his creditor, Dommange, was threatening him.

He went about in Florentine society and constantly visited the Villa de Quarto, residence of the ex-king Jerome, where he again became as much a Bonapartist

as in the days when he prophesied at Arenenberg; for the republican Alexander had a pronounced taste for imperial and royal personages.

Suddenly he disappeared. It was reported that he had gone on a cruise in the Mediterranean. When he returned, wearing a sombrero and dressed in a black velvet doublet slashed so as to show his silk shirt and in Spanish breeches slit open at the sides and embroidered in gay-colored silk, he made a sensation in the streets; it was all quite simple—he had been hobnobbing with Corsican bandits in the brush.

He had not wasted his time, had collected anecdotes, and put together some novels; everything was grist to his mill. At Marseilles, by the way, he had laid in a stock of local jests, told by the poet Autran, had chatted with drivers and muleteers as with princes and great ladies, and read chronicles at random, as his curiosity led him. . . . Then homesickness got the better of him. After each of these sudden disappearances, he would return to Florence with easy, expansive air, as happy as ever.

"Where have you been?" some one would ask.

"In Paris," he would answer.

"And what have you been doing in Paris?"

"Talking."

But he had not been to Paris merely to talk. He went to see his friends, to ask Buloz and the editors of various

papers for money, and to recall his existence to the Academicians. He would become urgent: "Hugo has been admitted and nearly all his friends were mine, too. Do, please, at your next meeting, sound Casimir Delavigne, who has shown some interest in me. . . . Stir up Nodier, Barante, and Molé."

In July, 1842, at the Villa de Quarto, Prince Jerome informed him that the Duke of Orléans had just died as the victim of a stupid carriage accident. Dumas sincerely loved the duke who had never refused him a service or a favor; this death threw him into the depths of despair. Weeping he fell into the arms of Prince Jerome, and as he had a feeling for theatrical effects under all circumstances, he exclaimed: "Permit me to weep over a Bourbon in the arms of a Bonaparte."

He returned to Paris to attend the obsequies of the duke in a funereal state of mind. His financial affairs were going from bad to worse, his comedies were not achieving success. Was his popularity to follow his protectors into the grave? He was over forty and had lost his former grace; he was growing fat. It was no longer the slender Dumas who received you with collar open at the neck, in piqué blouse and trousers, his feet in slippers. Now his chin hung down, his eyelids were heavy over his blue eyes, and his frizzy mop of hair gave him a fantastic aspect.

One evening, dressed in a long frogged coat covered with decorations, he was walking in the long walk of the Luxembourg Gardens, hunting a subject for a play, orating out loud and absentmindedly striking at the trees with his stick, when he saw two young men, obviously from the provinces, dressed in black of unmistakably ecclesiastical cut. Alexander at once noticed that he had been recognized and approached them. "Permit me, Gentlemen, to interrupt your walk. I want to consult you on a matter of conscience involved in the last act of one of my plays now in writing . . . " and without waiting for their answer, he began to recount the story of his life, the triumph of *Antony*, "one of those rare works which influence a whole epoch," and the letters he had received on this subject from the greatest ladies. He explained that dramatic ability was inborn in him, something that no one understood and attributed to his African temperament, and how he had attained glory. . . . Then, passing suddenly from exaltation to discouragement, he let his arms fall and said, with somber air: "Shall I confess it to you, Gentlemen? I, Alexander Dumas, often feel like throwing down the armor of the dramatic author and treading under foot all the tinsel of my worldly glory. I should like to turn my powers into a new direction. What do you think of it, Gentlemen? What should I have to do to become a priest?"

The two provincials were dumfounded.

"There's nothing simpler," murmured one of them.

"But should I have to go to a seminary?"

"But of course."

"Ah, that's something that doesn't suit me much, not in the very least." However he began to feel that this was his vocation. The instruction received in his youth from Abbé Grégoire had so deeply colored his life with religious sentiment that he could not enter a church without sprinkling himself with holy water nor pass a crucifix without making the sign of the cross. In the church of Baux, at the Grande Chartreuse, he had been on the point of giving up the world. Had not the moment come to take up this project again? Was there not in the church a new career for him, worthy of a man of talent? Dumas, emulous of Lacordaire; Dumas, founder of an order of preachers, what a sensation that would make in the world! The provincials timidly called his attention to the fact that he was married, but Alexander did not seem to consider that an obstacle.

It struck ten o'clock. The gardens were closed. But Dumas, once he got hold of some one would not let go. "Let us continue our talk near by, at the Place Saint-Sulpice!" And now abandoning mystical themes, he broached literary subjects. He told them that he worked enormously and that his production by far exceeded that of Victor Hugo; he touched on everything, recol-

lections of his travels, novels, history, plays. Then he exclaimed: "Should one not satisfy the demands of those elect spirits who wish to let their soul meet the soul of a great writer and who are in search of noble emotions? . . . Gentlemen, I shall send you seats for the theater."

"But we never go to the theater."

"Ah! Very well, I shall send you my latest play."

But the gentlemen from the provinces were curious about some one else and one of them grew bold enough to say: "We should like to meet a personage famous in the world of letters, who is, like you, one of the glorious constellations of our firmament."

"You mean Victor Hugo, of course?"

"No."

"Eugène Sue?"

"No."

"Balzac?"

"No."

"Mérimée?"

"No."

"Then I give it up."

Blushing, the provincial murmured, "We are curious to see Madame Sand." . . . "Ah bah!" said Dumas, surprised; but with an air of self-importance, he added: "Meet me tomorrow at the same time as today in the Luxembourg Gardens. You'll see Madame Sand on my

arm." And he began to relate reminiscent anecdotes about the lady until the provincial gentlemen chastely stopped him.

The next day they were there to the minute—but there was no Dumas any more than there was a George Sand. When the gardens were at last closed for the night, they departed. It had been a rainy day: perhaps Madame Sand had been afraid of the damp gravel.

So Alexander continued to dramatize his life, with princes, ladies, the stage, the cloister. . . . But his health was too robust, his optimism too habitual, he was too little given to dreaming and worrying to have his thoughts dwell long on melancholy. His true vocation was hard work mixed generously with pleasure.

A chronicler of the period describes him: "A man of fantastic clothes, dazzling waistcoats, golden chains, dinners of Sardanapalus, he kills horses and loves women." Alexander did, in fact, outfashion fashion and more assiduously than ever frequented the Café de Paris, where he came to enjoy the veal à la casserole, a specialty of the house; in this he had the same taste as Balzac. It was, in fact, their only point in common.

As he grew older he became a cultivated gastronomer. In the middle of a meal, he would lay down his fork and say: "Ah! that's terribly good, I must get the

recipe at once." He would descend to the kitchen to confer with the chef. This giant and enormous eater was satisfied to let the heroes in his books drink wine; he himself drank little. To make up for this, he relished water with a curious sensuality and could distinguish, in the country, whether it came from such or such a fountain. To him a feast did not mean a drinking-bout; his friends did not succeed in making him drunk and he was a match for any Russian. Nor did he use tobacco unless the way of smoking was picturesque. He indulged in Sinai tobacco grated with aloes, "which he smoked in a chibook with a cherrywood shank and an amber bowl, so that the smoke was a perfume instead of an infection." As a matter of fact, he did not need stimulants —was he not by nature sufficiently "volcanic"?

At home he kept open table. Luncheon began at half past eleven and ended only at half past four, for new guests were constantly coming in, and as they arrived, the cook had to run out for more cutlets. The master of the house often did not know the names of those he was entertaining. "Will you be good enough to introduce me to that gentleman over there?" someone asked him. "Impossible," he answered, "I haven't been introduced myself." He was never formal, he received poor and rich, fellow countrymen and foreigners, with the same cordiality. He made it a duty to be especially agreeable to

the English, wishing, he said, so to repay his obligations to Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott.

There was vanity in all this, of course, but no affectation. He never pretended to be other than he really was. One day he noticed a cameo which a university professor was wearing in his cravat. "That's a beautiful profile of Caesar," he observed. The professor was astonished.

"How do you come to recognize Cæsar?" he asked.

"But as his historian, of course."

"The world of learning does not know your book."

"Oh, the world of learning never speaks of me."

"Still a history of Cæsar ought to make something of a sensation."

"Mine has not made any; people read it and that was all. It's the histories which it is impossible to read that make a sensation—they are like the dinners that one can't digest. The dinners that one digests one no longer thinks of the next morning."

He said this not because he despised the science of history, but because he loved it in his own manner, revivified according to Michelet's method. He did not know the latter personally, but he admired him greatly and always had his *Histoire de France* before him on his table. As to the dry, dull, academic scholar, he felt the same aversion for him as for so-called experienced men,

"men with pale lips, eyes hidden behind spectacles, frozen speech, and pompous walk."

His pleasure was to walk about in life freely and familiarly and to watch the world at play; to the spectacle offered by mankind he was never indifferent. When the first fourwheeled cabs, called "milords," appeared on the boulevards, with the driver separated from his fare, he never stopped asking the general opinion on the innovation.

"That, Monsieur, will never catch on, you'll see."

"Why not, my friend?" asked Dumas.

"Because the customer will be bored when he can't talk with the driver any more." Dumas was such a customer; wherever he was, he had to talk; wherever people met, he had to have a place; and so ubiquity was his.

He had resigned himself to money troubles and the bailiff became an old acquaintance of his. When seizures threatened, he sent a secretary to the editor Cadot, or to *Le Constitutionnel* or to *La Siècle;* if the money didn't come, he treated the bailiff to get round him; then the comedy began again and Dumas paid six or seven times the amount of his debts.

One day some one came to ask for his penny to help bury a poor devil who had ended in utter wretchedness; he gave fifteen francs. "Ah," sighed the man who was collecting the money, "if only every one proved as generous as you, we could have a funeral of the second class,

and that would be most suitable, for this poor gentleman long held the office of bailiff."

"The devil! You're burying a bailiff! Here, have another fifteen francs. Try to bury two of them."

At bottom he wished no one ill, not even the bailiffs. If he was without money today, heaven and his talent would provide for the morrow; he did not change his way of living by a hair's breadth and preciously kept up his magnificent practices. One summer he bought a villa at La Varenne-Saint-Hilaire, furnished it from top to bottom, and soon his parasites swarmed over it like locusts. "The expenses for meat alone were more than 1100 francs a month." A little later, dissatisfied with the villa, he sold it at a quarter of the price he had paid for it and started off on a journey without awaiting the payment.

His marriage did not change his habits; and Ida also took liberties. Both lived in the same house in the rue de Rivoli where Ida occupied a sumptuous apartment on the first floor while Alexander had only a simple office on the fourth floor at the rear of the court.

One evening when he was returning from a ball, wet through and chilled, instead of going up to his own room he stopped at Ida's, knowing that he should find a fire there. Ida, who had already gone to bed, received him crossly, but Alexander was long-suffering; he peace-

fully warmed his feet and then went to a table and began to work. Suddenly the door of the dressing-room opened and, clad in his shirt, Roger de Beauvoir appeared. . . . Alexander assumed a high tone and Beauvoir explained that it was freezing in the dressing-room and that no one could possibly stay there. Without replying, Alexander marched up and down the room with long strides and the exercise seemed to appease him. Outside the rain was beating against the window. Could one, in all conscience, put any one out in such weather? Dumas invited Beauvoir to spend the night in an armchair, while he went to bed next to Ida.

A few minutes later, distressed to see the poor fellow shivering before the dying fire, he told Roger to come to bed, too. And there they lay, the three of them, sleeping the sleep of innocence.

In the morning Alexander woke up first, looked long at the two guilty ones beside him, and then plucked at Beauvoir's shirt sleeve. "Shall two old friends," said he "quarrel about a woman, even when she's a lawful wife? That would be stupid," and seizing the hand of the handsome Roger across Ida's sleeping form, he added: "Roger, let us become reconciled like the ancient Romans, on this public place."

He assumed no right to be severe, for women succeeded one another constantly with him; one went, another came; he could not, one of his intimate friends

tells us, "do without petticoats around him." Not that he was interested in the psychology of the fair sex—his heroines are all of the same type and ordinary; he was attracted only to dangerous or passionate women who could make virile decisions, like Christine of Sweden and Milady of *The Three Musketeers*, whose portrait he painted more carefully than usual. He was no more fastidious now than in earlier days, took his pleasures where he found them, was fond of change, and could not understand why she who had lost favor should bear him ill will.

Furthermore he was always generous, even lordly. He never disposed of the furnishings. The divinity who had presided over the dwelling always carried everything off when she no longer interested him. "The queen is dead, long live the queen!" was the rule. The new sovereign found bare walls, Dumas bought furniture again, and these changes of dynasty took place several times a year. Alexander himself assisted at the removals. "Take all," he once said while unhooking a picture, "but for pity's sake at least leave me my genius!" ("laissez-moi mon génie!") And young Dumas who was present at this scene and understood him to say, "Laissez-moi mon gilet!" ("Leave me my waistcoat!"), asked himself how much money this precious waistcoat might contain.

Stories like this were all over Paris. Everyone gossiped about him but without malice. Dumas always

appeared as a gifted bohemian whose idle remarks were carefully collected. His adventures, invented or true, were lucky windfalls for the newspapers, especially for Alphonse Karr, the chronicler of *Guêpes*. He told a story that Alexander one day bought a hunting dog at a very high price, went hunting, and shot a partridge. The dog instead of running ahead, played dead; Dumas, annoyed, seized the ramrod of his gun; the dog jumped up and took hold of the rod with his two hind paws; Dumas struck him with the butt, but the dog climbed up on his master and sat on his head; Dumas shook himself free, the dog fell to the ground, and stood at attention. . . . Then at last Dumas understood that instead of a hunting dog he had acquired a circus hound. Tales like this, equally simple and childish, delighted the Paris public.

And then he was such a good confrère! Neither literary hate nor political hate had any influence on his spirit. When Jules Janin compared him to Captain Fracasse with the red tail who was then a feature at the Palais Royal, no one could believe that it would mean a duel. With Alexander the incident would end, surely, with a good supper and no blood shed save that of "a friendly chicken." He was brave enough but easy-going and good-natured; he rarely quarreled with people, and Madame de Girardin called him "the most amiable of Alexanders." Balzac himself was obliged to confess that,

like George Sand, Dumas had no pettiness of soul, no base jealousy, and that he was capable of generous actions. "The rope dancer" had, in fact, volunteered his good services one day when the author of *Vautrin* was annoyed by one of his intractable creditors.

In this sort of affairs, Alexander was sure that he had ample experience.

CHAPTER VII

ALEXANDER AT HIS ZENITH

Dumas one day was visited by a tall fellow with heavy mustache and bright eyes, well turned out and with something of the air of a musketeer, whom Gérard de Nerval had sent with an introduction. His name was Auguste Maquet, he had been a professor, and now practiced writing historical romances. He brought Dumas one of them entitled *Le Bonhomme Buvat* or *La Conspiration de Cellamare*. The plot was interesting, the narrative a bit heavy. Alexander took the manuscript, speeded it up and made it lighter, and *Le Bonhomme Buvat*, now called *Le Chevalier d'Harmental*, appeared in *Le Siècle*. "The two most amusing volumes I have ever written," said Dumas ingenuously. Maquet's name did not appear, but he got 1200 francs as his share.

He was a resourceful fellow, this Maquet. He knew history, read much, and had ideas; he was a born treasure hunter. But as he had not succeeded in making an impression on the public himself, he clung to Dumas'

coattails, thinking that there was sure to be gain in the wake of a successful author.

Alexander, who till then had written only half a dozen novels, liked to have people bring him subjects and themes to develop. His specialty was working them up. When young Paul Meurice in 1842 had told him that he was translating *Hamlet,* Alexander exclaimed; "You've translated Shakespeare, my boy, and you haven't told me! Bring it to me!" and taking possession of the manuscript, he had so worked it over that a few weeks later the play was ready for the theater.

With Maquet it was the same. The professor brought the material, still in crude form and roughly sketched; the magician refashioned it, made it supple and agreeable. So was composed, in 1844, that masterpiece which remains as fresh and living as if it were written yesterday—*The Three Musketeers.*

Its historical sources were not heavy. From *Les Mémoires de M. d'Artagnan,* an apocryphal work by Sandraz de Courtils, Dumas got his hero's name, the episode of d'Artagnan's journey to Paris, an intrigue with Milady X, and the character of the innkeeper's wife who was to become Madame Bonacieux, as dark as Bell Krebsamer. *Les Mémoires de la Porte* supplied the incident of Madame Bonacieux's abduction, and a volume by Roederer, *Intrigues Politiques et Galantes de*

la Cour de France, the story of the diamonds sent by Anne of Austria to the Duke of Buckingham.

But Dumas thought it necessary to cut a figure as a scholar and would insist that he had gone through a manuscript in folio at the Royal Library—he gave the catalogue mark—entitled *Mémoires du Comte de La Fère.* Some scholar somewhere may have been caught by this innocent imposition; but the cream of the adventure is that Dumas was making history better than he knew. Those three strange names, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, "pseudonyms," he says, "by which Sandraz concealed names perhaps illustrious" designated three personages who certainly have existed. Athos, born near Sauveterre-de-Béarn, died in 1643, without doubt cut down in a duel, for his body was found "near the hall of Pré-aux Clercs." Porthos was named Isaac de Portau and belonged to the Company of Musketeers. It is said that his family still lives. The dainty Aramis was a squire and lay-abbot of Aramitz in the valley of Bareton, in the seneschalship of Oloron.

And now he has his characters in action. Dumas loves them as if they were a part of himself; he lends them his eloquence, his gaiety, his relish for adventure; he sums himself up in them; and while lunching or dining with Maquet, he interrupts the main developments of the story, and makes what he calls "a fine bundle of plans." The professor, full of zeal, piles up the pages; but Alex-

ander is insatiable. To escape from his usual parasites, he establishes himself at Saint-Germain, at the Villa Médicis, and there "works to the death."

Maquet never composes fast enough to suit him. "Some copy, as fast as possible," he writes, "even if it's only a dozen pages! . . . Hammer away, hammer away. . . . I'm completely dried up." He supplies the ideas, inserts episodes to fill out the action, and invents complications and solves them with the skill of a juggler.

The Three Musketeers is not alone on the anvil. *La Reine Margot* and *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* are there too. Dumas carries the sixteenth century, the seventeenth century, the Revolution to the fore with amazing sweep. Apropos of *La Reine Margot* he writes: "It's all going well up to this point, in spite of six or eight pages on politics; but now the interest will pick up again and people will simply swallow the pages mentioned. . . . It's your fault, dear friend, if we're not going on faster. Since nine o'clock yesterday I've been waiting with folded arms." Sometimes Maquet's copy is lost and Alexander is furious. "The mails should lose only the letters that ask for money," he holds. Now Alexander's copy goes astray, a more serious crisis, because a newspaper is waiting for the serial; but Maquet has so assimiliated his master's style, he knows his lesson so well that he reconstructs the missing pages from memory. . . . And the machine begins to function

again. "Give me thirty or forty pages more of Margot!" (heroine of *La Reine Margot*), Dumas begs. "Then do let me have a chapter of *Maison-Rouge* tomorrow. Then please come to lunch with me the day after tomorrow." A few days later he pleads: "More Margot! I haven't a line left. Montjoie and Saint-Denis! to the rescue!"

He writes as others ride to battle, with impetuous ardor and amusing verve at which he marvels himself. "These qualities—everybody knows with what careless frankness I speak of myself—these qualities I have in the highest degree." But while the man, so gay of speech, has moments of depression when he looks at the paper, he is alive as soon as he picks up his pen. A happy reaction never fails—"My wildest fancies have often sprung from my darkest days—in a tempest flashes the rosy lightning."

He had laid down an infallible rule for success. He was "a child of nature" and what entertained him was good, what bored him was bad. As he gained experience and skill, he shook off the reins of Sir Walter Scott and set his own pace. He used to say that novels were like dinners. And so should not the writer serve an appetizer first, begin by interesting the reader instead of wearying him, begin with action instead of with long preparation, explain the characters after they have appeared instead of having them appear after they have been explained? Dumas frankly adopts the former method and abandons

the English manner—he enthralls first and explains later; and to avoid any tediousness at the end, he inserts incidents and catastrophes in the simple plot, he "handles the emotional element broadly," he starts off anew on a phrase or a word, and he accomplishes all without being diverted from his essential purpose, at least in his masterpieces.

He knows how to capture the public and touch the sensitive cord. While he was writing *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*—the story of Athos' son, Viscount de La Fère—someone asked how he was going to keep up the interest. "Why, that's simple," he replied, "everything's going to happen to the viscount that happened to the count!"

History for him is just a yielding lady. When once his plot has been invented, he decides in what epoch to place it, or where "to hang his picture," and chooses by preference troublous, violent, disturbed times. He can not move or breathe in a peaceful atmosphere. He is a man of the sixteenth century, a partisan, carrying rapier and halberd, when he writes "the Valois Romances." He is a grandson of the Marquis de la Pailleterie, wholly devoted to Marie-Antoinette, when he writes of the Revolution. He is an imperialist when he speaks of the Restoration. He thinks that he changes with his characters. But Dumas is too much himself not to overflow into his tales. He writes of his own youth in

Ange Pitou and of his own office years in *Le Chevalier d' Harmental.*

To impart local color—for color without the adjective he had by nature—he undertook several journeys, visiting Fontainebleau for *Christine,* Blois for *Henri III,* Boulogne and Béthune for *The Three Musketeers,* Rome for *Isaac Laquedem;* and he says, "I have certainly lost more time in studying Jerusalem and Corinth at a distance than if I had gone there." It is probably true. If he had gone all the way to Jerusalem and Corinth, they would have been no more than Dumas' stage.

When he could have had original documents set at his disposal, he did not trouble to get them. They would only have hindered him and prevented his playing as gaily and as freely with his subject. How he wrote *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* is a revelation of his way of work.

He had long been fascinated by the character of that gentleman in love with Marie-Antoinette who tried to reach her to let her know of a plan for her deliverance. In January, 1845, Dumas announced his novel in *La Démocratie Pacifique* under the title, *Geneviève, un Episode de 1792.* In February the name of the novel was changed to *Le Chevalier de Rougeville;* but when Dumas received a letter signed by a Marquis de Rougeville, distressed to see his father's name printed in a journal of advanced opinions, he once more changed

his title and on March first announced *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*. Soon after the post brought him this letter: "Monsieur, call your novel what you like. I am the last of my family and I shall put a bullet through my head within an hour. De Rougeville. Petite-rue-Madame, No. 3."

As a matter of fact, on March 16th, 1845, Charles-Alexandre, Marquis of Rougeville, did commit suicide, victim of an unhappy love affair, leaving as his executors two writers, one of whom was Jules Sandeau. Not for an instant did it occur to Dumas to ask his confrères for the family papers of the deceased. Even so, rumor had it that a mass of documents relating to the Revolution had been turned over to him; he did not open them. To him truth was respectable, but a well managed imagination was more to the point. "It is permissible to violate history," said he, "on condition that you have a child by her."

What he did not like was to have any one question the care and devotion of his historical researches. One day it occurred to him to write a really conscientious book from authoritative sources. He chose the flight of Louis XVI. After starting from Châlons in a little carriage rented for ten francs a day, he could be seen following the traces of the king and his family, setting his step in their steps, questioning the peasants at the halting-places, and looking up old men who had been wit-

nesses of the tragedy. In order to play the scholar properly, he severely censured the blunders of M. Thiers—he found five, and most serious ones at that, on a single page—and also those of Michelet whom he so greatly admired. Armed with an ancient plan, he marked at Varennes the precise spot where the royal carriage had passed. The fruit of this journey is *La Route de Varennes,* a thrilling book, too little known, which specialists say has incontestable documentary value. So Dumas could proceed when he wanted to take the trouble.

It is a fine sight to see him at work—a happy natural force expanding. As soon as he wakes, he seats himself before his large table of light wood; near him are two chairs, some books on the mantelpiece, and an iron bed. This is not the study of a man of letters, but an artisan's workshop with its workbench.

If a visitor comes, Dumas holds out his left hand without ceasing to write. If the guest insists, he puts down his pen, chats, and as soon as the nuisance has left, takes up his work again. Though he is constantly interrupted, he remains good-humored; he drops a novel to construct a scenario with a collaborator and then is back on his novel without losing the thread of the story. Nothing interferes with his activity.

When his son, now twenty years old, comes to see

him and complains that he can't pay his debts, his father says: "Why don't you collaborate with me in place of Maquet? I assure you it's not difficult, and it will bring you forty or fifty thousand francs a year. All you have to do is to make objections, contradict me on the subjects I lay before you, or furnish me with the embryos of ideas that I shall develop without you." Meanwhile his purse is at his son's disposal; he has on the mantelpiece over there 650 francs, his whole fortune at the moment.

"I'll take fifty francs," says the younger Dumas.

"Better leave me a hundred francs," suggests the father.

"What do you mean, papa—a hundred? I'm taking fifty francs (cinquante francs)."

"I beg your pardon, I understood you to say six hundred (six cents)," replies Dumas who considered the loan quite natural.

Luncheon is brought to him on a little table; he turns his chair, eats rapidly, drinks some Seltzer, never coffee nor a liqueur, and returns to his worktable.

He has a mountain of miscellaneous information which he uses like an old practitioner. "You have a good memory," remarked Buloz, sarcastically. "I have only that," answered Dumas. And, in fact, nothing that he had heard, learned, or read was ever forgotten by him. "He lengthened his life backwards by his study of the

past," and metaphysical speculations did not obscure his vision. He had the wonderful gift "of inventing and fabricating in the spirit of truth," and so pages followed pages, and books followed books.

His beautiful handwriting ran straight along, without changes or erasures but adorned with occasional unexpected capitals, on the gay sheets of paper, blue for the novels, rose for journalistic articles, yellow for poetry. A printer from Lille, a fervent admirer, supplied him with this multicolored stationery. For Dumas was mad on the subject; he had special pens for novels, other pens for the stage, could not endure blue ink, and designed his dramas in beautiful curves, according to M. Oblet's writing lessons. Again, he could not compose a play sitting down; only when reclining, with his elbow on the pillow, could he create "this kind of work which always made him a little feverish."

His novels, on the other hand, were only a joyful recreation for him. There is a story about an Englishman who presented himself at Dumas' house and, hearing laughter in the workroom, said to the servant, "I shall wait until M. Dumas is alone."

"There's no one with M. Dumas, he is working," explained the servant. "Monsieur often laughs out loud like that when he is at work."

This splendid laughter—those of his admirers who knew Shakespeare called it his lion-laugh—still resounds

in his work and especially in his travel impressions. He took with him, in imagination, his friend Jadin, the flower painter, and made him act and talk according to his own fantasy; and Jadin, who remained at home in his studio in the rue des Dames, had to assume unforeseen responsibilities. "We wanted to invite you to a supper," a friend said to him, "but we saw in Dumas' article that you were with him in Switzerland." Or a lady would rally him, "Well, well! Monsieur, now I understand why you hadn't time to write. I thought you were ill in Paris, and now I learn from M. Dumas' feuilleton that you were with him in Leghorn where you chuckled the landlord's daughter under the chin!" Another would object, "Why the devil, my dear fellow, must you make so many jokes at the expense of the papal government?"

"But I've never even mentioned the papal government," protested the good Jadin.

"Get along! it's in the newspaper."

These innocent stories were carried back to Alexander. He was delighted. He felt that writing was not work but a way of living joyfully. He would readily have said with Corot, who whistled incessantly while painting, "What's any art worth that doesn't make people gay?"

In and out of his office there was always some woman coming or going—the lady of the moment. Dumas

boasted that he had never written an obscene line, and rightly so. He did not have to rouse his imagination to describe exploits in love; he performed them and so his work remained pure. But he would not permit his books to be sweetened or perfected "in the way they perfected little boys at Rome to give them more beautiful voices." When he sent his copy to the journals, he implored them to draw off his article as virile as possible from the hands of the operator. In his opinion the antique and the truth are often naked, never indecent; and he much preferred racy to emasculated drama.

In the evening the workman Alexander used to dine joyously; he told his friends what his characters had done that day and "rejoiced in the thought of what they will do tomorrow;" and when men of feebler powers expressed astonishment that he could endure such a regimen, he replied that he wasn't in the least tired—he didn't produce plays and romances, they were produced in him. How? He didn't know anything about it. "Ask a plum tree how it produces plums!"

But in spite of his wonderful vitality, every year regularly, "a fever that would kill a bull" laid him low for three days; he felt not ill but vanquished. Then he would go to bed, grope blindly for a glass of lemonade, and turning sideways to the wall, "he fell into his fever again."

With *The Three Musketeers* he regained the great popularity that had marked the appearance of *Henri III*, the first romantic historical drama, and of *Antony*, the first romantic modern drama; and for a time France was more interested in d'Artagnan than in M. Guizot.

It was a universal success that affected children and grown people alike. There's a story of a little Spanish boy at boarding-school in Paris who was homesick.

"Is it your mother that you want to see?" he was asked.

"No, she is dead."

"Then it's your father?"

"No, he used to beat me."

"Your brothers and sisters?"

"I haven't any."

"Then why are you in such a hurry to go back to Spain?"

"I want to finish a book that I began during my vacation."

"And what is the book called?"

"The Three Musketeers."

Balzac confessed to Madame Hanska that he had been reading *The Three Musketeers* the whole day—of course he was furious at himself for having so wasted his time; but even if Dumas didn't know history, one had to acknowledge that he was a delightful story-teller.

One day, on the boulevard, Béraud, director of the Ambigu theater, met Alexander and asked him to prepare *The Three Musketeers* for the theater. Dumas frowned. "My dear Béraud, don't speak to me of the theater. I don't want to think of it any more. I give up the theater." Three of his plays had just failed, one after the other. But Béraud insisted . . . and a few weeks later rehearsals were in full swing. Dumas watched over them with his usual care, with an eye for everything, and noted every effect produced. When the seventh tableau was being rehearsed, he saw that the fireman on duty had disappeared. For him the fireman was the barometer. He had him called back and asked, "Why did you stop listening to this last scene?"

"Because it didn't amuse me as much as the others."

Dumas walked into the manager's private office, took off his coat, cravat, waistcoat, and suspenders, opened his shirt collar, asked for the text of the seventh tableau, and threw it into the fire.

"What are you doing?" exclaimed Béraud.

"It didn't amuse the fireman—I'm destroying it. I see clearly now what's wrong with it." And he wrote it on the spot.

Paris gave its favorite hero an enthusiastic welcome and when the curtain fell, it shouted the names of Dumas and Maquet. The professor, who had not ex-

pected to hear his name, dashed upon the stage and tearfully embraced his master.

The moment was propitious and the two collaborators set to work again. In the course of a Mediterranean cruise, Dumas had passed near a little island, where he had not been able to land because "it was *en contumace*." [1] It was the island of Monte-Cristo. The name struck him at the time. A few years later, in 1843, he arranged with an editor for the publication of a work to be called *Impressions de Voyage dans Paris*, but he needed a romantic plot. Then one day by good luck he read a story of twenty pages, *Le Diamant et la Vengeance*, which was laid in the period of the second Restoration and was included in Peuchet's volume, *La Police Devoilée*. It caught his fancy. Here was the subject of which he had dreamed; Monte-Cristo should discover his enemies hidden in Paris!

Then Maquet had the idea of telling the story of the love-affair of Monte-Cristo and the fair Mercedes and the treachery of Danglard; and the two friends started off on a new track—*Monte-Cristo*, from being travel impressions in the form of a romance turned into romance pure and simple. The Abbé Faria, a lunatic born at Goa whom Châteaubriand saw vainly trying to kill a canary by hypnotizing it, helped to increase the

[1] *En contumace*—wilfully disobedient to a lawful order of a judicial or legislative body.

mystery; and the Château d'If began to appear on the horizon. . . .

The Dumas-Maquet machine was working in perfect order and a breathless public every morning pounced upon *Le Journal des Débats* for the new installment. Readers from the provinces wrote in to beg for a solution in advance; and if an installment was omitted, there was a shadow over all France.

Dumas was at his zenith—he no longer invented history, he created it. The guides at Marseilles now show every visitor Morel's house on the river, Mercedes' house among the Catalans, the cells of Edmond Dantes and of the Abbé Faria at the Château d'If. So, at Elsinore, the admirers of *Hamlet* are deeply moved before the tomb of the young prince of Denmark; and Dumas shares, for a moment, with Shakespeare the glory of having made a legend come to life.

Sainte-Beuve, soured and deafened by this noisy success, denounced the poverty of the literature of the industrial age. Of course, he wrote, Dumas and his emulators, Sue, Balzac, and Soulié, are suited to the requirements of their age; and *Monte-Cristo,* like *The Mysteries of Paris,* might pass for a battle gained; but not for a battle that profited civilization. Dumas did not disagree with him—his activity was supremely in-

dustrial. It had no purpose but to entertain and to distract. He was a blacksmith "who threw himself into literature as his father had thrown himself upon the enemy," who did not always test the metal which he used, but let the feeble warm themselves at his fire. His vast silhouette stood out black against the red forge, and the crowd cheered him because it loved "fruitfulness in creation, grace in strength, and simplicity in genius."

So Alexander appeared to the eyes of his son who knew what he was saying. He owned to his father: "I'm like the door-keeper who must open the door upon your celebrity. As soon as I give my arm to a lady, the first thing she does is to lift her skirt to keep it from getting soiled; the second is to ask me to introduce you to her." And when the lady stood before the great Dumas, his son would say: "I have the honor of presenting to you my father, a grownup child that I had when I was very small."

Obscure journalists could not endure Dumas' omnipresence, they met him at the end of every road and resolved to belittle him, to cry him down before the public. As early as November, 1844, after a disagreement with Buloz on the subject of his theater receipts, Alexander had violently attacked the Commissary of the King at the Comédie-Française, accusing him of keeping modern authors off the stage. Buloz's friends had taken

up the defenses; and Sainte-Beuve congratulated the director on having raised a dike against unworthy literary fashions, "a dike against which self-interested vanity must dash itself."

Dumas did not take the affair tragically and probably repeated to himself the old lines by Roger de Beauvoir in Buloz's praise:

C'est un faquin jaloux d' escompter nos esprits,
Il nous offre toujours son papier jaune ou gris,
Mais il ne peut atteindre à la saison prochaine:
....Buloz, c'est le roseau, et moi le chêne! [1]

At this point there entered the lists a poor wretch named Jacquot who had once written to Dumas suggesting a novel, "an important matter." Dumas had not replied and Jacquot, feeling scorned, although he had signed himself "Eugène de Mirecourt," set out to denounce to La Société des Gens de Lettres the unworthy means which "a fertile pen" employed to triple its resources, the employment of minor talents, and to urge the need of regulating collaboration in literary work. He affected not to mention Dumas' name, but every one understood; and M. Viennet, who did not like Alexander, "squinted his eyes." Literary circles

[1] He is a mean rascal to discount our brains.
He always offers us his yellow or gray paper,
But he can't reach as far as next season—
Buloz, he's the reed, and I, I am the oak!

took it calmly; and then Jacquot threw a bomb—his pamphlet, *Alexander Dumas and Company, Fiction Factory.*

Sample its tone: "Scratch M. Dumas' hide and you will find the savage. . . . He lunches on potatoes taken burning hot from the ashes of the hearth and devours them without removing the skins—a Negro! He runs after honors—a marquis! He devotes himself with magnificent sangfroid to the trade of pirate on the ocean of letters and boldly lands his prizes in all the bazaars of journalism and the bookshops. . . . " To arrive at the top he turned royalist in La Vendée, Bonapartist in 1830, and republican in 1832. His works are only foundlings whose father he has never been. But since he needs 200,000 francs a year, "he hires intellectual deserters and translators at wages that degrade them to the condition of Negroes working under the lash of a mulatto!" None of his dramas or his romances is really his own—*Charles VII* is by Gérard de Nerval and Gautier, *Teresa* by Anicet Bourgeois, *Kean* by Théaulon, *La Tour de Nesle* by Gaillardet; his novels are by Maquet, Fiorentino, Meurice, Malefille, or Paul Lacroix. In brief,

> *Il prend vingt travailleurs, copistes impudents,*
> *Chargés de rajeunir les plus vieux incidents,* [1]

[1] He takes twenty workers, shameless copiers,
Whose business it is to renew the oldest incidents.

and dares, monster that he is, to sign his name alone. After that the heroic Jacquot sends this challenge to Alexander: "Have recourse to the law if you like; we shall meet you there without fear."

The scandal was in the fire. Dumas' enemies sprang up like mushrooms. They said that his ears had been boxed in Florence; they made fun of Ida, Marquise de la Pailleterie, who to get talked about, gave out that she had lost a bracelet at the theater; and Paul Lacroix confessed that he, the excellent "skeleton-maker," had outlined most of Dumas' romances, developed the characters, added details to the proofs, and lent correctness to the archæological descriptions. Balzac, antipathetic though he was toward Dumas, was right when he wrote: "The pamphlet on *The Firm Dumas and Co.* has come into my hands. It is ignobly stupid but sadly true; and as no one in France ever listens to fools, and people would rather believe a witty calumny than a truth stupidly set forth, this will harm Dumas little."

In a letter to La Société des Gens de Lettres, Dumas freely acknowledged Maquet as his collaborator and enumerated the works they had written together. Soon after he made an agreement with his fellow-worker for a share in the profits and Maquet, for a financial consideration, waived any proprietary rights in the books already written and accepted new conditions for future collaboration.

Jacquot, alias "Mirecourt," was condemned to six months in prison for libel; on his release he supported himself by writing a "Gallery of Contemporaries," and dragged into the mud the authors who did not send him the information he wanted. One fine day he disappeared and the tale ran that he had buried himself in La Trappe.

Alexander, alive and smiling, watched the storm which raged against him. "Your father was black!" some one hurled in his face. "My grandfather was a monkey," he replied. He showed no anger, no rancor—he still took his walk on the boulevard, chaffed his surly enemies, and then, remembering an unfinished chapter would depart, saying: "Good! have I amused you with wit of good quality? And tomorrow they'll be saying that I had collaborators!" When he heard repeated that *Monte-Cristo* was by Fiorentino and Maquet, he sighed: "It's so simple to believe that *Monte-Cristo* is by me that no one has had that idea."

But romanticism in its decline did not care for the simple truth; it took delight in legends. While some said that George Sand, dressed as a man, rode through Paris with Lamartine, dressed as a woman, Dumas was reported to be having his novels written in cellars while he drank champagne with actresses in the storeys above; or, better, Dumas did not exist at all, he was

only a myth, a trade mark invented by a syndicate of editors to dupe the public. Even skeptics were persuaded that Alexander never wrote. "Then this is a novel that you're really going to write *yourself?*" a magistrate of Bourg-en-Bresse inquired.

"Oh yes," replied Dumas, "I had my last one done by my footman, but as it was very successful the rascal demanded such exorbitant wages that, to my great regret, I was unable to keep him."

On one day only Dumas was truly grieved. Béranger, whom he really loved, wrote asking him to include an interesting exile "in the number of miners whom he employed to dig out the mineral which he transformed into sterling bullion"; and Dumas replied: "Dear old friend, My only miner is my left hand which holds the book open, while my right works twelve hours a day."

He was exaggerating. He had collaborators, "but as Napoleon had generals." One has only to note how little the collaborators are worth when they are left to themselves. A Maquet, a Paul Lacroix, dull, pedantic, or clumsily brutal. But when Dumas sets his hand to the work, the story unfolds smoothly and easily; and from the flatness of a *Belle Gabrielle* the reader passes to the animation of *The Three Musketeers*. This gift, this secret of Dumas, invests his books with a perpetual bloom of youth.

The joyous Corot said to one of his friends one day,

"This morning I had no end of pleasure in seeing again one of my small paintings. There was nothing profound there, but it was charming, as though painted by a bird." Dumas, in his best days, had this selfsame charm.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GLORY OF MONTE-CRISTO

To his white villa, with terraced lawns surrounded by thickets, at Saint-Germain, Alexander on Sundays in summer invites some twenty of his friends "to vary the custom of the other days of the week when the friends invite themselves." The table is set on the lawn; around it are Roman amphoræ filled with ice, golden vases of Oriental design. The dishes are of Collinet's making, head steward of the Pavilion Henry IV, who has no equal in preparing cutlets à la Béarnaise; the devoted Michel, gardener and confidential manager, attends to the excellent service.

Alexander, gleaming with decorations, his stomach draped with a gold chain like a mountebank, hugs the ladies and tells stories. When night falls he is still talking "like the Arab story-teller prolonging the vigil of his tribe under the starry sky of the desert."

His life, outside of his hours of work, is a perpetual exhibition. When one of his young friends, Dujarier, co-manager of *La Presse,* fights a duel with a journalist named Beauvalon, Dumas at once comes forward, gives

his advice, and receives Lola Montez, Dujarier's mistress. The duel takes place, Dujarier is killed, and at his funeral Alexander is pallbearer with Balzac, Méry, and Girardin.

Then, out of a clear sky, one of Beauvalon's seconds is accused of having tampered with the pistols before the duel. The suit is tried before the Court of the King at Rouen, on March 26, 1846. Dumas is of course summoned to testify; but instead of coming by the railway like common mortals, he makes a sensational entrance in an open carriage. He repeats his effect in the courtroom. Present are all the "lady-lions" of the day, most of them his sweethearts past or present—Mesdemoiselles Liéven, Atala Beauchêne . . . and also Lola Montez, "who has the evil eye"; there are lawyers and men of letters, Berryer and young Flaubert. Dumas is altogether at home in this setting. When he begins to speak, an admiring murmur greets him.

The presiding officer of the court, M. Le Tendre de Tourville, asks him his qualifications; he replies, "I should say I am a dramatic author were I not in the country of the great Corneille."

"Monsieur, there are various degrees, keeping pace with the centuries."

Dumas is never at a loss and speaks easily. Duels! He's had plenty of experience of them; and when the president seems to be unaware that a duelling code

exists, he exclaims: "What! You don't know the duelling code! Why, it is signed by the Count of Châteauvillard and by many celebrities of literature and the nobility. It's been printed. Ask your bookseller for it, Mr. President." Then, to end his speech with an effective touch, he asks permission to return to Paris where, "he believes," one of his plays is being performed that very evening.

"You may go, but return tomorrow," says the president.

"In that case, I prefer to remain."

To remain—he asks nothing more, for he will never enjoy himself better than in that courtroom. He interrupts the witnesses, tells anecdotes, asks permission to speak on a personal matter, for he has more to say on the duelling code. It would need but little to make him direct the pleadings. When Beauvalon's second has been found guilty, he returns to Paris, completely intoxicated with his success.

For him the days are inexhaustible sources of wonder and happiness. He makes no provision for the future. "I live like the birds on the branch," he says. "If there's no wind, I stay there. But if it grows windy, I spread my wings and go where the wind carries me."

For a long time he had wanted to travel at the

expense of the government, for he thought it disgraceful that a man of his account should pay for transportation. As early as 1834 Guizot had opened a credit account of 5,000 francs for him, to be charged to "the funds of encouragement," as provision for a scientific voyage to the Mediterranean Coast. Little by little Dumas had pocketed the money without taking the boat.

But now, in September, 1846, the minister Salvandy suggested that he go to Algeria and write about the colony. It was not a bad idea, for the reports by deputies sent there would be whispers, while Dumas, who was read by five million Frenchmen at the least, might well inspire fifty or sixty thousand men with the desire to colonize. First he was to cross over to Spain to attend the marriage of the Duke of Montpensier with the Infanta—a great ceremony of which he would be the Dangeau.[1] Salvandy offered him 10,000 francs for expenses for the journey. Alexander demanded in addition a ship of state to carry him from Cadiz to Algeria, and abruptly went to find his son. He met him on the boulevard and said, "I'm going to take you with me."

"Where to?" asks the son. "To the *Frères Provençaux?*" [2]

"No, to Spain."

"Agreed! We're off to Spain."

[1] Dangeau, Philippe, 1638-1720. Author of famous *Memoirs.*
[2] A well-known restaurant of the period.

On October 2, Alexander went to the ministry of foreign affairs and received his passport. He was as proud as a king. He was going to represent France at Madrid and touch elbows with Spanish grandees; but in order not to become bored on the way, he took along as good companions the artists Giraud and Desbarolles.

The tale of the journey must be read in that delightful book, *De Paris à Cadiz*, an account of extravagant culinary deeds worthy of Don Quixote adorned with bandits, ambuscades, carbines, and wild nights at inns. One of Giraud's water-colors tells the story—Dumas dressed like one of Goya's *majos* is blowing the fire with a fan, Giraud is shivering in his mantle, and young Alexander is dreamily smoking cigarettes.

After playing a proud part at the court, Dumas wrote from Madrid to the French consul at Cadiz to ask whether "a warship" was awaiting him. There was no reply. Dumas grew uneasy—he clung to the idea of a government boat, his boat; it was his toy of the moment. When he reached Cadiz, he learned that a French man-of-war, *Le Veloce*, was anchored in the harbor, destination unknown. Dumas' excitement rose—had they broken their word to him? But he was scarcely settled in the Hôtel de l'Europe, when a naval officer came to inform him that Marshal Bugeaud had put *Le Veloce* at his disposal.

It was a beautiful cruise! Formally saluted by the

commander Bérard and his staff, Dumas passed before the crew lined up on the bridge. He at once took a high hand and gave orders; the commander acquiesced, everyone bestirred himself, and Alexander had *Le Veloce* put about according to his own sweet will. He stopped at Tangiers for a fishing party, at Tetouan to parade before an Arab chieftain. . . . But the French prisoners, freed by Abd-el-Kader, waited in vain at Melilla for *Le Veloce* to pick them up, and finally, despairing of seeing the ship arrive, escaped in launches. *Le Veloce* set out in pursuit of them. . . .

Next Alexander declared that, without touching at Oran, he would go directly to Algiers to thank Bugeaud; then, when he learned that the latter was on a tour of inspection in the interior, he decided to start at once for Tunis. . . . A small difficulty arose—Tunis had not been included in the program. Dumas grew indignant—he was being hindered in accomplishing his mission! The commander yielded. *Le Veloce* left Algiers; and a few days later, Alexander was awakened by the report of the ship's cannon, saluting in the name of the King of France and likewise in the name of Dumas, the city of Tunis with twenty-one shots.

Returning to Algeria, he enjoys himself more and more. He could be seen, arrayed in the costume of a Tyrolean hunter, firing at the eagles in the gorges of Rummel near Constantine; or followed by his servant

Eau-de-Benjoin, driving before him by blows with a stick a vulture that he planned to tame and that he had baptized Jugurtha.

At Algiers, he meets Bugeaud. "Ah!" exclaims the latter, "It's you, Monsieur the captor of vessels! The deuce! Don't stand on ceremony! ships of 280-horse-power for your promenades!"

"M. le maréchal," Dumas replies "I have calculated with the captain that I've cost the government 11,000 francs in coal and food since my departure from Cadiz. Walter Scott on his voyage to Italy cost the English Admirality 130,000 francs, so the French government still owes me 119,000 francs."

Bugeaud laughed, made peace, and Alexander invited him to dinner.

At the ministry of marine the matter was taken less lightly—why had *Le Veloce,* charged with taking on board the prisoners freed at Melilla, returned to Cadiz where she had nothing to do? Why had she sailed without orders from Algiers to Tunis? Consideration should of course be shown M. Dumas, writer of great talent, original dramatic poet, and "the inexhaustible author of tales whose truth is not their chief merit." But these titles are not to be compared with "Son of the King," dignitaries of state, or even mere deputies. There was impropriety in putting under the orders of a literary

man without a regular mission a vessel, its officers, and its sailors exclusively subject to the service of the state.

"There has been no other favor shown him except turning from Cadiz to Tangiers," replied Bugeaud to the minister of war. "M. Dumas on the other hand maintained that if he did not go to Tunis, he would be prevented from accomplishing his mission; furthermore *Le Veloce* had despatches for that destination."

The deputies, whose nerves were on edge over Dumas' success, since his adventures put the debates of the Chamber in the shade, seized upon the incident; M. de Castellane formally put the question, what was this scientific mission entrusted by the government to a writer of feuilletons? The French flag had lost dignity by sheltering "this gentleman." Forty thousand francs had been spent without reason and with endless ridicule for the government. Another deputy, M. de Maleville, reproached the minister Salvandy with having said to "this gentleman"—Dumas' name was not mentioned—"You will go to Algeria to make it better known to Messieurs the Deputies, who understand nothing about it." The ministers of state were embarrassed. One replied that he had writen to Bugeaud for an explanation (the marshal's answer was in his pocket at the moment); another announced that *Le Veloce* had touched at Cadiz for the requirements of the service and at Algiers by mistake. . . . One expected to hear, any

moment, that *Le Veloce* "had proceeded wholly on her own." Salvandy, as a more important dignitary, assumed a haughty tone, and the incident rested.

But Dumas meant to make capital of it. He wrote to M. de Castellane: "The Chamber of Deputies has its privileges, the court has its rights; but there are limits to every privilege and to every right. You have exceeded these limits in regard to me. I have the honor of demanding reparation." Castellane and his colleagues who were challenged at the same time intrenched themselves behind the inviolability of the Chamber; and at once public opinion turned in favor of Alexander.

Madame de Girardin defended her friend by showing that this manufacturer of feuilletons, "this gentleman" was far from being a mere "gentleman," and that he honored letters by his great works, his infinite studies, and his universal information. "If he has to describe a chase he knows all the words in the Dictionary of Hunters better than a great follower of the chase; if a duel, he is more learned than Grisier; if a carriage accident, he knows all the terms of the trade as well as Binder!"

Not only the Chamber of Deputies, but the courts were kept busy by Dumas. In January, 1847, he had two suits on his hands, one with *La Presse*, another with *Le Constitutionnel*, "for feuilletons that were not sup-

plied." What a splendid chance for his harangues! "I was the only Frenchman invited to the marriage of the Duke of Montpensier; the great cordon of the Order of Charles III was bestowed not on the man of letters, but on the man, on me, Alexander Davy, Marquis de la Pailleterie." Then he paid his respects to the members of the Academy who had not accepted him: "There are forty Academicians. Let them agree to supply you with eighty volumes a year and they'll go into bankruptcy. I have done what no man has ever done before and will not do again." In spite of this plea in the grand Plutarchian manner, Dumas was condemned to supply *La Presse* with eight volumes and one-fifth of a volume within the period of eight months, and *Le Constitutionnel* with six volumes and one-third of a volume within six months and a half! Machine-made literature had reached its highest point.

In Paris nothing was talked about except Dumas, his voyages, and his lawsuits. Some laughed, others were indignant. "When I think of foreigners reading all that, I get gooseflesh!" exclaimed Madame de Castellane. As a matter of fact foreigners did make their comment. Thackeray, while deploring that Dumas had taken for his own, without acknowledgment, a short novel from *The English Review* and that he put so many blank pages between his chapters and so few words on his pages, declared that he himself had a particular taste

for "continued stories." The cycle of *Mémoires d'un Médecin,* of Joseph Balsamo, was then appearing at the same time as the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe,* and Thackeray ended with this apostrophe to Dumas: "May the physician whose memoirs you have undertaken, beginning with the reign of Louis XV, again make the fortune of the apothecaries of the July Revolution with his prescriptions."

But the Jacquot-Mirecourt clique, furious at having failed to pull down the colossus—this combination of Beaumarchais and Fracasse, of Sir Walter Scott and Barnum—took up again the old subject of plagiarism. Now it was Victor Hugo who had been robbed and *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* was merely another treatment of *Jumeaux,* an unpublished work by the great Hugo written eight years before. They outdid themselves in printing Dumas' blunders, as when he called a pilot M. Nauclerus, attributed *Les Bijoux Indiscrets* to the younger Crébillon, spoke of the Emperor Julian's work, *Le Misopogon,* as a citizen of that time, and of Zosimus, the Greek, as a Latin barbarian.

Alexander let these ironies, this barking of dogs pass. He had never so fully felt his power. As confident and courageous as d'Artagnan, as rich as Monte-Cristo, he began to show signs of megalomania and to think that he was not sufficiently appreciated. He was worth hearing at Madame de Girardin's, criticizing the stupid

electoral law which prevented his being a deputy because he paid no land-taxes. "What!" he exclaimed, "I, who, thanks to the taxes levied on my works, have given the government hundreds of thousands of francs, I am not a deputy, while the first rascal who comes along, who puts together a shed with dirt and the flimsiest materials and pays taxes, can become one!"

"According to you," said Morny, who could hold his own with Dumas, "the smoker who smokes the largest number of cigars ought to be deputy." But Alexander, without answering, started off again full tilt. "I am blamed and why? Because abroad I am received as they would receive a sovereign, because my presence effaces that of princes, because *my* frigate saluted a sovereign with 21 cannon shots and the sovereign returned the salute, shot for shot, because abroad they see me as the true representative of France, because I am a marquis and your deputies are not, or those who are ought not to be!"

"When's he due for the insane asylum, Doctor?" some one whispered to Dr. Cabarrus who was present.

"I give him two years, at most," was the answer.

But Dumas was not a candidate for the asylum; he simply believed himself born for all the glories of this earth because the crowd meekly followed him wherever he pleased to go. *"Cur non?"* said he. Why not? Why not become deputy, tribune, minister?

At Saint-Germain he had the whole town in a fever —there were fireworks in the evening on the terrace, performances at the theater which he had purchased, where his fair friends acted. He kept the ball rolling.

"What is there at Saint-Germain that it makes such a stir?" asked Louis Philippe who had just had Versailles restored and wanted that royal necropolis to liven up a bit.

"Sire," replied Montalivet, "Dumas has to serve fifteen days in prison as a National Guardsman. Order him to take his sentence at Versailles and you'll see!"

The suggestion displeased the king who held "the big schoolboy" in no great favor, but the big schoolboy continued to follow his prescription to create good humor and gaiety around him.

One day in the course of a walk near Saint-Germain, on the slope of a hill called Monts-Ferrand, Alexander discovered a site that seemed magnificent to him. Before him was the valley of the Seine; behind him a wooded plateau; no neighbors; it was the very place for a château.

The grandson of the Marquis de la Pailleterie could not always live cooped up in a villa or in rented apartments. He needed an estate where he could worthily establish his splendor and no longer be re-

proached with paying no land-taxes. Dumas sent for an architect and laid the project before him.

"But M. Dumas, the soil is clay; on what can we build the château?" he ventured.

"You must dig down to the tufa-stone where you can build two arcades of cellars."

"But the cost will be several hundred thousand francs."

"I hope so."

The estimate rose to 48,000 francs; the château itself cost more than 200,000. But what a success! The style, truth to tell, was not altogether pure but was meant to recall the Renaissance. There were iron balconies, a façade with carved panels and sculptured flowers in the Italian manner, windows with leaded panes, turrets and watch-towers, weather-cocks with banderoles bearing the devise: "Au vent la flamme! Au Seigneur l'âme!" The arms of La Pailletrie adorned the lintel of the great entrance with these words: "J'aime qui m'aime!" ("I love him who loves me!"), golden initials forming a design in the center of the grille. . . . It all had an air so authentically feudal that one felt the lack of portcullis and drawbridge. All the same it was a very suitable setting for *Henri III et sa Cour.*

The château of M. *Dumasse*—as he was called in local speech—was soon famous. The natives of Pont-Marly christened it Monte-Cristo, palace of wonders

with cellars of gold; and in Europe and America people spoke of Monte-Cristo as they had spoken of Versailles in the seventeenth century and of Saint-Helena in 1820.

The nabob, proprietor of the jewel, remained extremely simple. Clean shaven, with his woolly hair pressed under a velvet cap, but with his neck framed in a shirt front of rare lace, you could see him waiting on the road for the diligence from Paris. Every one made way for him crying "Monsieur Dumasse! Monsieur Dumasse!" Within view of Monte-Cristo terrace, the host climbed down from the coach and led away his guests—journalists, writers, especially actors, such as Mélingue and his wife, Marie Dorval, Atala Beauchêne . . . and the visit to Aladdin's palace began.

There was a wood planted with elms, larches, and young oaks. "It's very small," said Dumas, "but very literary. This is *Antony's* avenue."

"There's very little shade, my dear fellow."

"What do you want? Glory first—the shade will come later."

The gardener Michel comes unexpectedly upon the scene: "This morning I bought 500 gudgeon, 800 white bait, and 150 trout."

"Turn them loose in the fountain-basins."

"But the fountain-basins have slipped down."

Everyone rushes toward the spot—yes, the fountain basins really had slid down. Dumas had had a series

of little basins built like a cascade; but the basins, whose plaster supports had crumbled, had slipped upon one another like a pile of plates.

"If the fish had been there we should only have had to serve them—the basins have become dishes," remarked Alexander as he led his party toward "their apartments."

They saw the diningroom with its carved woodwork and the little drawing-room adorned with authentic cashmeres. Suddenly a Turk appeared who embraced Dumas effusively. "An artist!" explained Alexander. "He was decorating the tomb of the Bey of Tunis. I told His Highness that the longer his tomb remained unfinished, the longer could His Highness continue, without scruples, to make his subjects happy, and so His Highness lent me his artist. . . . You must see my Arabian room." They penetrated a sort of Alhambra adorned with carvings, stucco, and stalactites where the eye lost itself. From the Alhambra the way led into a large hall the frieze of which bore in order the busts of famous writers of all the ages.

"But you're not there, my dear friend," remarked Gozlan, the journalist.

"I! I am in their midst," responded Alexander.

There were resources of every sort at Monte-Cristo, for the proprietor, who was at once princely and of the people, appreciated both castle and cottage. There was

a stable with four horses, a carriage house with three vehicles, a "tonneau" game, a greenhouse, flowers, an aviary, a monkey house. Alexander would present his menagerie so: "This is the monkey, Mlle. Desgarcins; her husband, Sieur Potich; her lover, the last of the Laidmanoir; the vulture Jugurtha. . . ."

But work was calling him—what should he have "the bastard of Mauléon" do today? Dumas would hand over his palace to his guests from cellar to garret, his garden, his stables, and all the rest . . . and retire to his island. It was an island not much larger than the basins that had slipped, in the middle of which stood a Lilliputian pavilion, every stone of which bore in red the name of one of the master's works. The windows were of colored glass. Within it was painted blue, with an azure ceiling strewn with stars, and for his work a simple table was fastened to the wall. Alexander takes off his jacket and waistcoat, puts on white pantaloons and slippers, and, with bare neck and perfect freedom of movement, he writes and writes. . . . At luncheon he reappears.

"Ladies and gentlemen, here is a father whom I have consecrated to wearing white!" cries the younger Dumas, and every one sits down to table.

Ida Ferrier, Marquise de la Pailleterie, is no longer the presiding divinity of the place; she has disappeared and is "living her own life" somewhere in Italy,

where she died in 1859. Dumas had no regret for her loss. She had grown too suspicious by far and pestered him for money. The reigning favorites who managed the house and servants with high hand were either the actress, Person, or Madame Strivaneck, agreeable and stupid, aunt of a Strivaneck who was the sham Déjazet of the moment. But Dumas maintained a lavish tradition of hospitality; the table was sumptuous; and when there was no more table wine in the cellar for the servants, he would say, "Give them champagne. That will transform them!" In front of the perron of the castle the peasants with their asses and their carts passed freely, for Monte-Cristo was open on all sides. There was neither wall, nor moat, nor hedge.

Dumas knew how to look after his popularity, not slyly like his confrères, but publicly. He stirred Marly to a fever pitch as he had stirred Saint-Germain, with fireworks and receptions; and the receipts of the railway increased by 20,000 francs a year during his three years at Monte-Cristo.

What would not people do for Monsieur Dumasse? If he needed ice when the dog-days came, it was reserved for him and him alone. One day a rich bourgeois sent his servant to ask for ice "for M. Dumas." The servant took out a goldpiece and asked "How much is it?" "Ah, you rascal," cried the dealer. "You haven't

come from M. Dumas. . . . Give me back the ice and get along! M. Dumas never pays."

This habit of paying Alexander simply could not acquire, but to make up for it there was not a poor man nor a failure who did not receive some aid from him. If he had no cash, he would hand over a rare possession, or even house and table-room. A shrewd fellow who brought him the skin of a serpent that had been killed once upon a time by General Dumas in Egypt, lived at his expense for three years.

Alexander did not dream of complaining that he was almost stripped to the skin by his hangers-on—he got so much satisfaction out of it. In the street every porter knew him by sight and would ask, "M. Dumas, where shall I carry your trunk?" The shopkeepers, knowing that he threw money out of the windows, charged him three times more than "the generality of martyrs." His image spread everywhere; the fat ox of 1847 was named Monte-Cristo; and in this same year the Théâtre Historique opened.

The Duke of Montpensier had reproached Dumas with having his plays produced on second-rate stages—the Ambigu was not a frame for a drama like *The Three Musketeers*. "But, Monseigneur, I haven't a theater of my own," answered Dumas. "I shall think of it," re-

sponded Montpensier, and he demanded from the minister Duchâtel a license for a new theater for Dumas. Duchâtel made objections—there were a great many amusement places, too many perhaps; but a prince of the blood always has the best of an argument. The license was granted.

A part of the Hôtel Foulon was bought and demolished along with the cabaret *L'Epi-scié*, well known to the police; and five months later the Théâtre Historique was ready. The façade made a fine appearance with its four Ionic columns, its caryatids representing Comedy with a mask and Drama with a dagger, and its arched bay adorned with two groups—the Cid and Ximena, Hamlet and Ophelia. There were 2,000 seats, five flights, and a stage adapted to the most complicated machinery. The cost rose to about a million and a half francs.

The Théâtre Historique opened its door on February 20, 1847. The crowd waited from the night before; at ten o'clock the soup-peddlers appeared, at midnight the vendors of hot bread, then those who sold straw; the crowd lay down and slept in the light of several lampions. At daybreak coffee and milk and cakes were distributed, and water carriers offered their services to those wishing "to make the ablutions permitted"; then came the triumph of the groceryshops, an outdoor feast on the pavements, while singers in full chorus celebrated the glory of Alexander:

On dit q'au théâtre Dumas
On pourra prendre ses ébats:
Vive l'auteur des Mousquetaires! [1]

At last the hour struck, and when the Duke of Montpensier had taken his place down front, the curtain rose on the first act of *La Reine Margot.* Alexander and his manager Hostein had done their work well. Settings, costumes, accessories, the animated and picturesque movements of the crowds, all had been attended to with the greatest care; and the play ended at three o'clock in the morning amid an enthusiastic uproar.

Dumas now had his tool in hand, he could dramatize his own work and teach the people the history of France. For two years he played successfully on "this organ with a hundred stops" called the Théâtre Historique, an object of envy to his fellow writers. Vigny asked simply that he might "play a canticle there"; Balzac came with a drama about Catherine II, which became transformed into a bourgeois drama; Autran, a native of Marseilles, a classical tragedy which finally foundered at the Odéon. But Alexander naturally remained choirmaster, and *Monte-Cristo,* presented in flesh and blood, held the public for two evenings.

The receipts for the first year were magnificent—

[1] They say that at Dumas' theatre
One can have one's pleasure:
Long live the author of *The Musketeers!*

more than 700,000 francs, and Dumas, greatly encouraged, spared neither his efforts nor those of his actors. One night, after he had prepared the mise-en-scène for *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge,* he went to stay for the rest of the night with the actor Mélingue, instead of returning to Marly. It was four o'clock in the morning. Mélingue opened a bedroom door and said to Dumas, "Lie down and sleep." A few minutes later, hearing a noise of trunks being dragged about and furniture being moved, he rushed in and found Alexander, in his shirt and very busily occupied, who said to him, "Your closet would be much better over there, and your bookcase here." Mélingue, furious, worn out with fatigue, blew out the candle, while Alexander, who continued to arrange his stage setting, insisted: "I swear to you that this would look much better with the closet over there. . . ."

He had such powers of radiating life and enthusiasm that, whatever he did, people were passionately interested in his projects. When he announced the production of *Les Girondins,* he was bombarded with sketches and anecdotes of the Revolution some of which he may have used. "Ah!" said a shopkeeper to a newspaperman, "Alexander Dumas, he's my god! I read him in Paris and when I'm traveling; my wife reads him; my children read him; we drink his health at home and in my cellar at Bercy. . . . But he's a

droll fellow, too, that Alexander Dumas! He did me in nicely once at *Caligula*. It wasn't until the second act that I noticed that it was in *verse*." Alexander had become aware of such objections and he wrote no more in verse except when he lost the sense of his vocation.

Sainte-Beuve wrote lauding Dumas' animation, his easy narrative which so artfully surmounted obstacles, his facility in covering enormous canvases without ever wearying his brush or his reader; to which he added: "He grasps much but does not tie it up tight."

Alexander accepted both the praise and the blame in good part. "Hugo and Delacroix," said he, "have many points in common; I pride myself on resembling Horace Vernet." The resemblance was moral, not physical, for Vernet was a dwarf beside Dumas. The author of *La Prise de la Smalah*, musketeer in miniature, painted as if at the point of the sword, surrounded by a whole bazaar of war, and illustrated history with grandiloquent compositions that attracted the masses. . . . Just so Alexander with all his vanity knew in what field he won his greatest triumphs. He explained his idea by this parable: "A farm is managed by three friends. The one cuts the harvest, the other gathers it, the third threshes and winnows it. I am the one who threshes and winnows. Anything that remains over I feed to the

chickens. And that's why all the chickens run to me when I call: 'Come, my little ones; come, come!' while they don't even know the voice of my two associates who have a higher position on the farm than I. . . . I give form to Lamartine's dreams and clearness to Hugo's thoughts, and so I serve a double portion to the public which would be badly nourished by Lamartine's too unsubstantial fare, and would get indigestion from Hugo's too heavy fare. . . . Lamartine is a dreamer, Hugo is a thinker, and I am a popularizer."

If he had had a little practical sense, if he had separated the wheat from the chaff, Alexander might have known glory of finer quality. But he entered with all his heart, like the good fellow he was, into the life of the coming day without troubling about the morrow.

"Ah, by the way, papa, where have you learned life?" his son asked him one day.

"I've taken good care not to learn it; where should I have found time to write?" answered Alexander.

His hand, small but firm, held tight what it could hold, excepting money. His editor paid him 40 or 60 centimes a line of 60 letters, but Alexander received only one-third of this sum, the rest being reserved for his collaborators and his creditors. Had he got twice as much, he would have squandered it. A letter to Maquet in December, 1845, is curiously revealing: "I owe you for money borrowed, I believe, 240 francs more than

our accounting. Have you 260 francs to send me? Then I'll owe you 500."

Sometimes, harassed in his work, he took refuge with Schoebel, the Orientalist, in a little summer-house in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, which he called his Parisian desert. There was a palm tree encircled by a varicolored tent over which the tree reared its meager head. "It's a complete setting; a palm tree from the Sahara, an African tent, and a French plume," said Dumas who made himself comfortable, chatted with the Orientalist and his daughter, and pretended not to notice Madame Schoebel's uneasiness, who saw in this woolly-haired giant seated under her palm tree only "a son of a mulatto, a worthless rascal living with a lot of sweethearts."

But these moments of respite were few; and whenever he learned that there were to be speechifying or disturbances anywhere, he rushed to the spot. When the opposition launched a movement to reform the electoral laws, against Guizot and Louis Philippe, he came forward with a resounding letter. Forgetting that he had been a friend of the Duke of Orléans and that he was under obligation to the Duke of Montpensier, he became more republican than he had been in 1832. At the Théâtre Historique the chorus thundered forth the *Song of the Girondins*, those glorious ancestors whom Lamartine and Michelet had brought into fashion again, and

Alexander boasted that so he was preparing the way for the new revolution.

When the revolution burst forth in 1848, he was quick to summon the National Guard of Saint-Germain and was ready to lead them to Paris; but the good citizens and shopkeepers, who were afraid of shots and intent on saving their lives as fathers of families, could not appreciate his bellicose proclamation: "The Revolution, after ten years of struggles abroad and at home, is returning to its source and crying Long live Liberty! . . ." However, Alexander arrived on the Pont-Royal in uniform, followed by four or five national guardsmen, wearing out his lungs and making as fine gestures as if he were commanding an army; he appeared in the Chamber of Deputies at the moment when the people were demanding the fall of the Orléans dynasty; and he served his apprenticeship as demagogue when, after the firing in the Boulevard des Capucines, he ordered his theater to be closed out of respect for the public mourning. "Let us remain of the people," he said to his manager Holstein. "There will still be a great people in France when there will no longer be princes anywhere." A few weeks later a tree of liberty was planted before the Théâtre Historique; Varney's orchestra, seated on an outside balcony, gave a concert, and the crowd danced until four o'clock in the morning, thanks to Alexander's generosity.

A new career was opening before him—the stupid electoral law which kept a man of his standing out of parliament was dead, the envious politicians who had cavilled at him about his frigate were swept away. Alexander prepared to ascend the tribune—he would address France.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH ALEXANDER FOUNDERS AND COMES UP AGAIN

On February 29, 1848, Dumas wrote to Girardin: "To you and *Le Constitutionnel* my novels, my books, and my literary life; but to France my word, my opinions, my political life!" The announcement was made—Dumas was entering the lists.

On the first of March he founded *Le Mois*, his organ, a monthly summary of all historical and political events, edited entirely by himself, with this motto: "God dictates and we write." The first thing that God dictated was a letter demanding the restoration of the equestrian statue of the Duke of Orléans to the courtyard of the Louvre; then, as the revolution advanced, *Le Mois* urged the end of the Duke of Chambord's exile, the recall of the princes of Orléans, the restoration of the government of Algeria to the Duke d'Aumale, the vice-presidency of the republic for Lamartine, and the position of marshal of France for Cavaignac who had put down—with what severity is

well-known—the rising of the people in June. In such manner proceeded Alexander the republican. . . .

His proclamations were no less astonishing; in one of them, addressed to the workingmen of Paris, he enumerated "his claims to be a worker," and proved with figures that in twenty years he had composed four hundred novels and thirty-five plays, thus enabling 8,160 persons to earn their living, including proofreaders, machinists, ushers, and heads of the claque; all these without counting the Belgian pirates and foreign translators of many countries.

In his profession of faith to the clergy of France, he developed a less practical line of ideas: "If among modern writers there is a man who has defended spirituality, proclaimed the immortality of the soul"—this coming from the author of *Antony* was a bit reckless, to say the least—"and exalted the Christian religion, you will do me the justice to say that it is I." He concluded this manifesto of respect for sacred things with these words: "I salute you with the love of a brother and with the humility of a Christian."

Why the workers and the clergy should remain indifferent to his arguments Alexander could not understand. Now he must have a seat in the National Assembly. Paris is lukewarm because it is in the hands of professional politicians. Would Villers-Cotterets answer his purpose? No, he has been too long away from his native

town. Saint-Germain? There he is famous, there may be a chance; but the electors, turned suddenly conscientious, bethink themselves that Monsieur Dumasse is a monster of immorality and refuse him.

Thereupon he writes to the electors of La Gironde that he will gladly present himself to them; the Girondins, ingrates that they are—for had he not, thanks to "his chorus," prepared the way for the Revolution of '48, just as the Marseillaise had prepared for that of '89?—answer that he is not their man. Then one of his young admirers comes forward to assure him that he can be elected by l'Yonne. Alexander at once takes a stagecoach, stops at an hotel at Sens, borrows a pair of boots from a traveler because one of his own is down at the heel, and rushes to Joigny to present himself before the honorable body of electors. They give him a bad reception, calling "O ho! the marquis! the aristocrat! the Negro! Orléans' secretary!" The hall is against him from the start.

Dumas replies that he has not forgotten his beginnings and still preserves a profound respect for the memory of the Duke of Orléans. "As to my name, now I am somebody and I call myself Alexander Dumas, nothing more." After the meeting, two workmen follow him and rail against him; he seizes one of them, carries him like a bundle of straw to the parapet over the river and says, "Ask mercy or I'll throw you into the water!"

The workman excuses himself and Alexander adds, "I wanted to prove to you that my aristocratic hands are as strong as yours!" But these are not exactly campaign tactics. Alexander receives only 3,000 votes and fails of election.

He changes his tone. His program as a whole was quite as good as the rural socialism of his friend George Sand, and did not Lamartine honor the writers' guild in entering politics? But Dumas has neither the right manner nor the art of adopting and maintaining an attitude. First he would put himself on a level with the oppressed masses and pass for a down-trodden Negro; and after singing the praises of liberty, he would begin to regret the days of long ago when courtesy and the manners of good society flourished. He would long to see once more unfolded before modern eyes "the silks and the velvets and the beautiful golden brocades which royalty decreed for the clothes of our ancestors." The bloody uprisings of June and the brutality of the mob had sobered him. He appeared once more among the connections of the Marquis de la Pailleterie, whose place in the heraldry of nobility is between the Lannes de Montebello and the Marquis Laplace, and whose emblem bears on a blue field three wings unfurled, in gold, two and one, holding a golden ring in the center.

"Dumas' coat-of-arms?" a wit remarked. "I know what it is—a big jaw on little gold." These odd electoral

campaigns had cost him dear. "If I had had enough money," he once remarked to Alphonse Karr, "I should have gone to Martinique to be elected from there"; and pointing to his woolly hair he added "This would be a representative's brevet . . . but perhaps I shall send them a lock of my hair by mail."

The revolution decidedly had turned out badly for him; moderate monarchists were preferable to radicals like Leroux, Proudhon, or Lamennais, and order was preferable to anarchy. So the ex-republican, through the mediation of the charming actress Alice Ozy, sent a message to the Duke d'Aumale, inviting him to return to France—"Paris is in the power of the first man who wishes to seize it."

Louis Napoleon, the future Napoleon III, was already thinking the same thing. Dumas had voted for him since the election to the presidency of the Republic, but he was persuaded that the former conspirator with whom he had shaken hands in the prison of Ham was not seeking to become dictator. He addressed him in *Le Mois* as follows: "As a wise man, you are not dreaming of Empire; as a well-informed man who knows French history, you can not forget that the 18th of Brumaire came after the campaigns in Italy and in Egypt and was followed by Marengo and Austerlitz; as a modest man . . ." et cetera, et cetera.

But while the wise, well-informed, and modest man

was pursuing his own ends, Alexander foundered. "Though he piled plays on plays, novels on novels, Pelion on Ossa," he could not, though he pretended to be a second Enceladus, shake off the burden in his own life. It was too heavy a task.

Dramatic art was not in favor with the new revolution, and *The Chorus of the Girondins* did not satisfy a mob that demanded more highly colored songs. The Théâtre Historique, after its first splendid showing, fell to fair receipts only and then to none. The people were not interested in the past history of France, preferring to make new history themselves. The theater failed; at once the pack of small creditors like Dommange was increased by the wolves with sharper teeth.

Dumas was helpless before this onslaught. He began to experience poverty of a sort. He could no longer count upon Girardin who was ill disposed to him since their lawsuit and replied to his requests for money—250 francs—: "I am not the cashier of *La Presse,* I am one of its editors." Maquet, who lived on Dumas, exclaimed that he was being left in the lurch. "Tell me," Alexander wrote to him, "is my life not a problem since my life depends on 600 francs that are all I have? . . . The ancients represented Necessity with an iron wedge. With all the good will in the world, my dear fellow, it's

impossible to send you 1,000 francs out of the 600 francs that I have left." And to wheedle the professor into a more sympathetic mood, he added, "For me every collaboration with any one but you is adultery." Maquet really allowed himself to be softened and replied: "Let me write day and night, and from what I write, do you make money for yourself."

Fantastic dreams of making money! Dumas could only write promissory notes, and once, in looking at the piece of stamped paper on which he was about to sign, he sighed: "To think that this paper at this moment is worth 35 centimes, and that it won't be worth anything at all when I've signed it!"

After losing his theater, he lost his palace. "Palmyra, between Marly and Saint-Germain," became the prey of bailiffs and was stripped of its glories, one by one. The horses, the carriages, the furniture, the birds, the menagerie departed. The vulture Jugurtha, no longer attached by a slender chain of silver but by a simple cord, was appraised at 15 francs, and pledged to an innkeeper, a creditor for 3,000 francs; he ended his life, very old and without feathers, in the court yard of the Pavilion Henri IV, the witness of so many vicissitudes, splendors, and ruins since his capture in Algeria that he had assumed the air of a philosopher.

The sheriffs dismantled the castle piecemeal, and the expenses rose to 25 or 30,000 francs a year. At last

Alexander resigned himself to its sale, and was only too happy to get 32,000 francs for the deserted carcass whose exterior alone preserved a royal appearance in the midst of the neglected garden. Why did not some financier think of taking in hand the business affairs of this good "workman in the field of letters" and give him the freedom to labor? It was a task of a kind to tempt some honest man, said Maxime du Camp; but the race of Mæcenas had passed away.

Not long after the sale of his castle, Alexander had one of his occasional collaborators, Fiorentino, to dinner. For dessert he served two little plums, wrinkled and black, quite lost in the plate, and said, "Help yourself. Stand on no ceremony, take at least one of these plums and eat it. . . ." Then he added with a smile, "You've just finished 100,000 francs." "How's that?" asked Fiorentino. "Nothing simpler. These two little black plums are all that is left me of Monte-Cristo, and Monte-Cristo cost me 200,000 francs."

He seems to have been affected at this time with an extraordinary malady for him—melancholy humor. He thought of the friends that had passed away. In January, 1844, it was Nodier's funeral which he followed side by side with Vigny.

"We haven't time to see each other," he said to the latter, "but we read each other."

"And we love each other," replied Vigny.

Afterward the poet had returned to his ivory tower; one no longer saw him; he was just another who forgot. In May, 1849, it was Dorval who died without leaving enough to pay for her burial; Dumas of course had not a *sou*—ah, if he could only have been like the chevalier Torald, hero of one of his stories, whose magic purse always contained 25 gold crowns. To pay for his old sweetheart's funeral and obtain a concession at the cemetery, he pawned his most beautiful decoration, the Order of Nicham.

The good had passed away, the evil and the ordinary remained; and Alexander spoke with some bitterness of this rest of humanity, architects, contractors, and "men of letters, who would have enough stones to erect a monument to a writer of genius if they picked up those they had thrown at him during his lifetime." He saw a void forming gradually around him for his poverty was notorious. Béranger said: "My son Dumas has wasted his talent as certain ladies waste their beauty, and I'm very much afraid that, like these flutterers, M. de la Pailleterie will end on a bed of straw."

On December 2, 1851, Louis Napoleon, the wise man, revealed himself in unexpected form to Alexander's eyes —by a *coup d'état*. A year later he restored, to his own profit, the imperial dignity. Victor Hugo was already

exiled and Dumas, pursued by officers of the law, thought it prudent to imitate him. That a political motive should be imputed to his departure, did not at bottom displease him; and on December 7, 1852, he took the train for Brussels, accompanied by young Alexis, called Soulouque, a little black whom Marie Dorval had once brought in a basket of flowers.

To avoid the expense of a hotel, he lodged at No. 73, Boulevard Waterloo, in an apartment suitable enough, but in no wise recalling Monte-Cristo. He still cut something of a figure, had as secretary a former representative of the people, Noël Parfait, a gloomy and difficult man and a stern watchdog over his master's purse, commonly known as "Never-Content." These ex-revolutionists had more practical sense than the ex-republican. Alexander, as one of his fellow exiles said, "was now guarding fortune's chariot which had borne him forty years and had sometimes spilled him out." To drop the metaphor, he began once more that life of a convict of letters which had been Balzac's and which was his own. In three years the former representative of the people, Noël Parfait, copied, four times, eleven new works that made up ninety-six volumes.

Outside of his hours of work, he led an exile's life, that is, a life of boredom and tittle-tattle. Alexander, who usually troubled himself little about the affairs of others, could not help smiling at how his friend Hugo

had deceived himself. "When Victor Hugo," he explained, "wrote the newspaper articles that later cost his sons several months in prison, he was thinking: I receive 9,000 francs as a member of the Chamber of Deputies; let me call the attention of the people to my two children, and they also will be deputies; and as 3 times 9 makes 27, we shall have a family income of 27,000 francs."

But the *coup d'état* had overturned all such fine calculations.

Dumas himself did not make financial plans; he earned his living day by day, and as he began to enjoy writing his *Mémoires,* his good humor returned; he became once more a jolly comrade, always ready to be serviceable; and it came about that Hugo himself required him in a delicate transaction. The business was simply to inform Madame Hugo, who was ill at the time, that her husband still loved her but that "nature being nature, the deuce take it!" he felt obliged to take some one in her place and that this some one was Mlle. Juliette Drouot. Only Dumas could undertake a mission of this sort. He carried it out conscientiously, moved to pity when he saw the deserted wife in tears.

In Paris the Jacquot-Mirecourt clique triumphed—at last the Negro was down! They recalled the avidity of this exploiter who played at disinterestedness, all the while demanding a position from the Duke of Orléans,

the direction of the Comédie-Française and the Odéon, the Legion of Honor, engagements for his mistresses in various theaters, a chair in the Academy, and a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. . . . And while these starvelings of the press were gnawing away at him, the critics pompously announced the end of this factory literature which gained effects by words not by ideas. More gaily humorists, like Monselet, showed Dumas, the colossus, watching

à travers ses jambes écartées
Passer de ses rivaux les flottes démâtées.[1]

Alexander did not comprehend in the least this torrent of invective and irony; what were they complaining of? Surely he wasn't burdening the newspapers any more: *La Presse, Le Siècle, Le Constitutionnel* were free to all comers. Why didn't these gentlemen fill his place and write some *Monte-Cristos* or *Musketeers?* "Go on, Gentlemen, go on; no need to wait for my death for that. I have only one regret—that I can't distract myself from the gigantic labor I am pursuing by reading my own books. I beg you to distract me by letting me read yours."

But these gentlemen produced nothing, and Alexander had to find amusement for himself by experiments in magnetism. In former days he had tried his hypnotic

[1] Between his legs, spread apart, the dismantled fleets of his rivals pass.

power on Alexis Didier, a celebrated somnambulist, and had succeeded so well that Didier exclaimed on being aroused from his sleep, "Take care. A little more and you would have killed me." Now, instead of Didier, Alexander "magnetized an hysterical baker's wife and caused her to make surprising contortions which she could not remember on awaking." It was the special treat reserved for his friends when they came to visit him at the Boulevard Waterloo in Brussels.

Before leaving Paris he had entrusted his interests to one of his secretaries, Hirschler, who was to divide the spoils of the Théâtre Historique and Monte-Cristo among the creditors. Hirschler managed his master's affairs so skillfully that an honorable settlement was arranged in the bankruptcy proceedings. Freed from the pursuing pack, Dumas betook himself to Paris once again with a small supply of linen in his valise and twenty louis in his pocket.

On that first evening in Paris at an hotel in the Place Louvois, where he had decided to live, Alexander reflected sadly that in re-appearing on the boulevards he sacrificed his aureole of a political refugee, "one who had been proscribed by the new Cæsar." He could no longer say: "What will remain of our century? Almost nothing. The best men are in exile—Titus Livy (that

was he himself) is at Brussels, Tacitus (Victor Hugo) is in the Jersey Islands."

With his tools broken—for *Le Mois* had ceased to appear since 1850—his friends passed away or scattered, and his reputation impaired, he would have to make over his whole position anew.

Another man might have fumbled or groped his way back. Dumas, at fifty-two, reëstablished himself with astonishing ease and vigor. He founded a journal, not a scandal sheet or political review, but a family paper that was to be entertaining and pure, bearing the famous name, "*Le Mousquetaire,* M. Alexander Dumas' Journal." Everyone exclaimed, "A Utopian idea!" and he answered, "If it were not Utopian, would I have taken up with it? *The Musketeer* will live just because it is impossible."

The first number appeared on November 12, 1853. It was a great success. The tone of the paper was unusual. It announced that "This journal does not accept the advertisements of theaters or booksellers. It pays for its seats and buys its books." It promised to be independent, above all to interest itself in criticizing the critics. In the silence of the Empire, when Lamartine was mute, Victor Hugo banished, when Michelet, Quinet, and Eugène Sue were interned, when Proudhon was in prison, he, the great Alexander, would make his voice heard.

"What is he after?" his enemies asked. "Is he going to play a nasty trick on his old comrade, Jules Janin? forge a weapon against the theater managers who have been hostile to him? organize publicity about himself and his works?" Something of all this was in Dumas' mind; he explained to the public that "he was tired of being attacked by his enemies and badly defended by his friends in the journals of other people." More simply, he wanted to make money.

The Musketeer was housed in the rue Laffitte, in the square court of the Maison d'Or, facing the restaurant. On the ground floor were the offices. There was a tiny antechamber where, on a straw chair, sat Michel, former gardener at Monte-Cristo. Dumas, after an experience with a defaulting cashier, one day had had a flash of inspiration—"Now I have my business under control! Michel can neither read, nor write, nor count—I'm going to make him the cashier of *The Musketeer*." And unceremoniously Michel was promoted to this dignity. Dumas loved this honest peasant from Saint-Germain who was so well practiced in the art of dumping enterprising bailiffs into the stream at Monte-Cristo by means of movable bridges. He called him "my Michel." Now this cashier without cash smoked innumerable pipes in the antechamber, received people, and in the evening made his bed in the kitchen next door, a black,

narrow place where the bundles of newspapers were stacked.

Through the antechamber you reached a little hall furnished with several chairs and a large sofa from Tunis, salvaged from the shipwreck of Monte-Cristo; on the wall hung a sketch by Maurice Sand, *A Sarabande,* in which appeared the four musketeers. There the regular contributors of the journal worked: Audebrand, Asseline, Henri Conscience, Aurélien Scholl, and the business manager, Martinet, a dry fruit of law and journalism, "a dingy man with hairy beard," whom the chief dismissed at the end of two months and replaced with Urbain Fages, from the South, a former lawyer and learned Hellenist, who had written for the theater and later abandoned it.

The chief himself lived in a little room on the third floor hung with blue wallpaper, furnished with three chairs and a pine table covered with a red tablecover. The only article of luxury was a small Etruscan vase in which drooped a rose, a carnation, or a lilac branch, "last token of idyls that were ending." But to reach the chief, one had first to apply to M. Rusconi.

He was a bizarre personage, little M. Rusconi! Thin, quick, and with a crafty manner, this Italian, born like Virgil in Mantua, had been involved by chance in some great historic events. He had taken a cup of coffee with Napoleon at Elba, conspired against the Restora-

tion in 1822 with Dermoncourt, former aide-de-camp of General Dumas, Alexander's father, and "at Nantes received the hat which he treasured as a precious souvenir of the Duchess of Berry." Inspiring a certain respect by his pepper-and-salt whiskers—for Rusconi was past sixty—he circled around his master, doing all and nothing. To define his services, Dumas had to coin a new verb—to rusconate. Factotum, attorney, and careful guardian of the master's wardrobe, he was always in the bedroom through which one passed to the workroom and he introduced feminine visitors. When necessary he intervened between Michel, the cashier, and the creditors, and you might hear him exclaiming: "It would need so little to assure the success of this paper. If only all of Monsieur's creditors would become subscribers!"

Beside M. Rusconi, Hirschler appeared from time to time, official business manager, who saved Alexander from disaster and admired him heart and soul, saying: "There's more gold in his head than in all the sands of California. And his heart? It's a charitable board, with folding doors wide open." There were the secretaries—Viellot, a big, thin fellow who had the distinction of imitating the writing and the signature of the master so exactly that he became "the secretary of handwriting," answered personal letters, and copied three hundred novels. Finally there was Count Max de Goritz, a

noble Hungarian, with dull complexion and eyes shining with a strange light, whom Dumas had met at Brussels as a refugee from the political police of his country, and whom he brought to Paris and raised to the dignity of salaried translator at 350 francs a month. In this capacity the Count cut the history of Germany up into small slices for the use of the readers of *The Musketeer*.

In this microcosm of journalism, only one man really worked—Dumas. Every day for five successive hours he piled blue page on blue page. People accused him of writing by the line and he did not defend himself against the charge. He admitted that, before taking up his pen, he never knew what he was going to say. But once he was off, he clung fast to an idea and never stopped. "It is so pleasant to run over the country and along the stream, like the witch elms!" he exclaimed. If inspiration deserted him completely, he walked down the boulevard, watching the people, reading the signboards, and snapping up a name or a word as he passed. Then he returned to seat himself at the pine table covered with a red tablecloth. When there was desperate need, he had recourse to his secretaries—once Fages translated the *Iliad* to him from the open book, Dumas wrote from his dictation, and signed it. But this way of writing a serial story scandalized the classic Paul de Saint-Victor, and Alexander had to suspend the publication of the novel by Homer. Dumas was astonished

at this captiousness. Had he not turned the Bible into a romance in his *Isaac Laquedem* without anyone's dreaming of protesting?

If the factory was functioning full blast on the third floor, things were not going so well on the ground floor. There, in spite of the warning on the door—"The public is forbidden to enter here"—there was a terrifying swarm of long-haired poets, hostile critics, embittered romantics, and hungry strugglers, all pushing and shouting. In the courtyard of the Maison d'Or, the tenants grew alarmed and sometimes Dumas, drawn from his labors by "the clamor of these wild beasts," would come out, pen in hand, and bending his big head over the balustrade of the stairway, shout: "What the deuce are they doing? Aren't they going to cut their throats?" Then he would return to his work cursing: "And this is a newspaper office! It's a nest of serpents. That's why they don't eat one another up."

He would have found pleasure in writing quietly and handing over without erasures that fluent prose which Aurélien Scholl nicknamed "galidumas"; but how could he write in the midst of this chaos which he himself had organized, this anarchy which he had carefully called into being? Incessantly Rusconi entered—there was a bill or postage to pay. . . . Alexander threw down his pen, folded his arms, and stormed. Even worse were other interruptions, as when the chief of police

summoned him to headquarters and informed him that his regular translator, Count Max de Goritz, and his wife who claimed to be Louis XVII's daughter and therefore Marie-Antoinette's granddaughter, were nothing but a rascal named Mayer, wanted by the police for swindling, and an adventuress. Dumas regretted somewhat the counterfeit-Count, who had been useful to him, and the counterfeit-Countess very much, for she had charm well worth savoring. Just as he was preparing to leave the police station, the chief called him back and said: "There are four more men on your paper under observation!" This editorial staff of *The Musketeer* was a nest of serpents indeed.

Happily there were still some old friends, friends of whom he was sure and who assisted him with their talents.

Méry, comrade of difficult days, as ugly as ever—Gautier called him the Christ of monkeys—often climbed the stairway of the Maison d'Or, and his lean parchment-like face grew curiously animated when he told of his hunting in India or extolled a scheme for suspension bridges over the boulevards, "because," he declared, "there should be bridges for vast currents of men just as for vast currents of water."

Sometimes, and always at unusual hours, there

appears a man of unquiet eye, dressed in a wretched, worn little cape, who moves about feverishly, and speaks of his initiation into Oriental cults and of Eblis, the angel of evil. It is Gérard de Nerval, Dumas' traveling companion on his German journey, now afflicted with chronic madness, who lives in terror of "Changar, the bath attendant at Dr. Blanche," whose duty it is to tie him up at the time of his crises. Dumas loved this madman and published two of his novelettes, some poems, and that strange, obsessing sonnet, called *El Desdichado* ("The Unfortunate"):

Je suis le ténébreux, le veuf, l' inconsolé,
Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie. . . .[1]

Imaginative as he was, Alexander could not quite understand the lovely, delicate folly of Nerval; when he was again shut up in Dr. Blanche's private hospital, Dumas devoted to him an almost obituary article in which he eulogized this distinguished spirit, perfectly adapted to his metamorphoses, in turn an Oriental king awaiting the queen of Sheba, a sultan of the Crimea, an Abyssinian count, a duke of Egypt . . . or a prince of Aquitaine. When he was again lucid, Nerval thanked his friend for the epitaph in these words: "Here is much glory which has fallen to me before I have become its

[1] I am the gloomy, the bereft, the unconsoled,
The prince of Aquitaine in the deserted tower . . .

heir." Then he tried to describe the supernatural mood in which his sonnets of the moment were written, and added: "The last folly which will remain with me will probably be to think myself a poet; it is for criticism to cure me of my madness."

When Nerval, after one of his long nocturnal strolls, appeared at *The Musketeer,* gaunt and dying of hunger, Dumas always received him with open hand, generously and warm-heartedly; but one morning, he learned that Dr. Blanche's patient had been found hanging from a grating in the rue de la Vielle-Lanterne. Dumas immediately thought of a memorial, and opened a subscription to raise a simple monument for poor Gérard, "a black marble slab with some verses on it— The tomb of a poet, the epitaph of a king." Such antitheses were about all the poetry of which Alexander was capable.

At the Maison d'Or one saw again forgotten celebrities like Emile Deschamps, one of the founders of the romantic group, *The Cenaculum,* who would come from Versailles, carefully wrapped, expensively gloved, with his red ribbon in his buttonhole, and would try to have his works of other days republished that his name might once more resound.

"Bow low to our Emile, Gentlemen!" Dumas would say, when Deschamps opened the door.

The Viscountess of Saint-Mars was there who signed her articles Countess Dash, an old friend of both

Beauvoir and of Dumas, who called her Gabrio. Gabrio, although a bit stout from age, was still clever; she knew her Alexander through and through: "A woman tactful enough to close her eyes on his pranks, to make his house agreeable for him by inviting his friends there, and above all not to bother him at his work, that woman could be perfectly and eternally happy with him." Alexander for his part returned the consideration of the countess and even when the situation of *The Musketeer* was critical, Gabrio always received her louis per day.

The editorial office of the paper, however, was in need of strengthening, and Alexander, who was quite aware of this, wanted to attach his son to his enterprise as editor. But young Dumas was trying his own wings; his father's house did not appeal to him, he found it too bohemian, and came there rarely. Besides, he was working to create popularity for himself; and after his novel, *La Dame aux Camélias,* had achieved a great success, he made a play of it which he brought to his father. Alexander wept, laughed, and then threw himself on his son's neck. The lad's talent had astonished him at first and then vexed him, for plainly the younger generation was shouldering him into second place; and he was too much in love with glory and celebrity not to suffer from this. But after reading the play whose composition he had advised against, paternal pride got

the upper hand. "He's my son to the very marrow," he used to say to anyone who would listen, "and from the beginning of his career he's been a superior dramatist. His heart is as big as his head. . . . Just let him be, and if all goes well, this youngster will be the son of God!" A magnificent phrase which paints Dumas whole—for in the future he rejoices in his son's glory as if it were his own, he calls himself artisan, and *Alexander II* is his finest achievement.

None the less a difference in sentiment kept them apart, as well as a difference in their ways of life. On the evening of the first night of *La Dame aux Camélias,* Dumas informed his son that he was dining at a restaurant with some friends and added:

"You'll simply have to join us there."

"Impossible. I have been invited for this evening a long time ago."

"Are you having supper with some women?" asked his father, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"No, with one woman."

"And who may it be, if I'm not indiscreet?"

"Mamma."

"Ah!" said Dumas, suddenly grave, "perhaps you are right." And that evening the author of *La Dame aux Camélias* really dined in a little apartment in the rue Pigalle, where Catherine Lebay was continuing her peaceful, obscure life.

Alexander II certainly had no intention of entering the factory of *The Musketeer*. When his father asked him to contribute, saying, "Now do give me a helping hand," he brought him an article on sculpture, to be civil. That was all.

CHAPTER X

FROM MUSKETEER TO SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

The Musketeer had started off well. At the end of two months there were 4,000 subscribers and 6,000 copies sold in Paris. The outlying theaters were making a new reputation for d'Artagnan who appeared wearing a large felt hat and singing, "I am the Musketeer!" At the Folies-Dramatiques they showed a gigantic Dumas, dressed as Aramis, brandishing an eagle's plume instead of a sword.

Letters from admiring readers flowed into the paper. Lamartine wrote to Dumas on December 26, 1853: "You are superhuman. My opinion of you is an exclamation point!" Michelet wrote from Nervi: "I am present in spirit at all your struggles of every kind, and if I am struck by your indomitable talent, adjusting itself to so many absurd exactions, I am no less impressed by your heroic persistence."

Heinrich Heine, paralyzed and almost blind, sent to "the ingenious writer who is that great youngster of a Dumas," a most ardent testimonial. When he was enduring the worst tortures and could move only by

catching at the cords fastened above his bed, it was Alexander's novels and articles that were read to him. "Surely after Cervantes and Madame Shariaz, better known as Scheherazade, you are the most entertaining teller of tales in the world. What ease! what freedom of fancy! and what a good fellow you are!" He thought him more French than Victor Hugo. The latter "lacked tact and his soul was devoid of harmony. His muse, like beautiful Englishwomen, had two left hands." Dumas, on the contrary, had a popular, generous spirit. "Your first name and your last name are currency worth more than gold and silver." Alexander held his head high in delight and in the colloquial tone he could so well assume, he wrote in *The Musketeer:* "Let me for a moment strut to the door of the Academy, dear readers; give me time to go and return, to watch M. Viennet, M. Tissot, M. Jay, and ten or a dozen others passing, and I shall come back to you. . . . Here I am!"

Even the most hostile seemed to grow softer toward him, and Mérimée, cold Mérimée whose art is at the opposite pole from Dumas', confesses to Delacroix that he has the greatest esteem for the author of *The Three Musketeers* and prefers him to Sir Walter Scott.

At the Maison d'Or these eulogies were printed as ingenious comments for the benefit of the public. But sometimes they were more difficult to make use of as

when Victor Hugo wrote from Jersey, "You are restoring Voltaire to us, supreme consolation for France, humbled and silent." Would it be well to publish this compromising letter? Dumas wanted to. He loved Hugo's poems, *Les Chatiments*, stanzas of which he recited on every occasion, for he had brought back from Belgium steady animosity against the Empire. Napoleon III, the former "wise man," had now become in his eyes "a damned Dutchman," for didn't all the chancelleries of Europe know that Louis Napoleon was the son of Queen Hortense and the Dutch Admiral Woerhuel and that his official father, King Louis of Holland,[1] had denied him? In the drawing-rooms Alexander liked to recite epigrams to delight the exiled French:

Dans leurs fastes impériales,
L'oncle et le neveu sont égaux:
L'oncle prenait des capitales,
Le neveu prend nos capitaux. . . .[2]

But the police held the press in an iron grip and so Dumas listened to the counsels of prudence and let the great Victor's letter go unpublished. Later he regretted it and three years after, in March, 1857, he seized the

[1] Louis Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother, married Hortense. He was King of Holland from 1806-1810.

[2] The uncle and the nephew are alike in their imperial pomp: The uncle took capitals, the nephew takes our capital.

opportunity to express again his admiration for the exile. When the actress Augustine Brohan dared to attack Hugo in *Le Figaro,* he took her violently to task and even ventured to demand of the Théâtre-Français that this person should not act in any of his plays. He had of course neither the right nor the power to prevent her, but Hugo was grateful for the gesture. "I love you more every day," he wrote from Hauteville House, "not alone because you are one of the brilliant lights of my century, but because you are one of its consolations."

The brilliant light of the century continued his trade of galley-slave. "He is the Ixion of the theater, the Enceladus of feuilletons who incessantly turns always the same play on his wheel and forever rolls up the same novel." So yelped the little curs of the press, driven off once more by the Negro. Yet it was true that *The Musketeer* really lacked a policy and direction. "Let us see, what flag are we following?" the editors asked the master.

"No flag and all flags!" he answered.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean it's all the same to me, provided the paper is amusing."

Two officious friends, Polydore Millaud and Villemessant, seeing that *The Musketeer* was drifting, offered Dumas their help, the one money, the other

his experience as a journalist; but magnificent as always, Alexander thanked them in these words: "All my life I have dreamed of having a journal that belonged to me, to me alone; at last I have it and the least that it can bring in is a million francs a year. I have not yet received a *sou* for my articles. At 40 *sous* a line, this amounts to 200,000 francs that I have earned since the founding of *The Musketeer,* a sum which I am quietly leaving in the treasury in order to receive in a month 500,000 francs at once. Under these circumstances, I require neither money nor a manager. *The Musketeer* is a gold mine and I intend to exploit it all alone."

But, all the same he saw that *The Musketeer* was making no stir—he must pepper it with polemics. He chose Buloz for his butt, and after an unflattering portrait of the subject, he told after his own fashion the story of the founding of *La Revue des Deux Mondes* and recounted the blunders of this former Commissary of the King at the Théâtre-Français who had credited *Cinna* to Racine. Buloz, furious "at this old Negro of a Dumas" whose lucubrations he declared he had not read for fifteen years, retorted by recalling the slips of *The Musketeer's* manager. Had he not written in his voyage to Sinai, a country which he had never seen, incidentally, "*La Pile de Volta,* this mineral which is found in the entrails of the earth?"

Alexander knew the game. Seeing that his adversary was touched to the quick, he parried with an article entitled "Buloz has got it," in which he accused Buloz of having kept the gains of one edition of *La Vendée et Madame*. Buloz saw red and started a libel suit. Dumas and little Rusconi, as manager, were fined and condemned to publish the judgment in the newspaper. Everything was perfect; *The Musketeer* was making people talk about it.

To keep up the publicity he made use of philanthropy and started a subscription for the work of Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs. He himself begged in person for money after a dinner at the Moulin Rouge, a cabaret on the Avenue de la Grande Armée, "for the incurable girls, please!" and collected 90 francs. Then he thought of having a monument erected for Balzac, who had died four years ago. Balzac's widow took this amiss and inquired by what right Dumas arrogated to himself the privilege of raising a monument to a man who had not cared for him. Alexander replied that Balzac's tomb was neglected; and there was a new suit in which *The Musketeer* played the leading rôle. Delacroix, an impartial witness, drew the moral: "Dumas was right to wish to render to his dead confrère, whom he detested when he was alive, this small honor which cost him nothing."

None the less *The Musketeer* did not flourish. On

the ground floor the staff forever roared instead of working, and the cashier-gardener Michel railed at "these editors who don't edit, while Monsieur wears himself out upstairs." Monsieur complained that renewals of subscriptions were rare, while in the paper basket under the pine table, unopened letters containing checks and orders went unnoticed.

Chaos grew more chaotic and the desperadoes of the first floor, seeing no cash, respectfully sent their collective resignation to the editor-in-chief. Alexander was outraged by such ingratitude from people whom he had launched, who owed him everything! Then he grew calm and the next day the following announcement appeared in *The Musketeer:* "We have good news to announce to our readers. All my collaborators have just sent in their resignation. They are all leaving *The Musketeer*. The public therefore no longer has any reason for not subscribing *en masse*."

In the future Dumas, undisturbed by "the nest of serpents," covered his sheet entirely alone. When the hour for luncheon came, Rusconi went down to the grocer to get eggs, parsley, and butter, and the master cooked his omelet on the embers of the fireplace. . . .

Fate was not yet ready for *The Musketeer* to die. It sent Madame Clémence Bader to the office.

This daughter of a hatter of Vendôme who was not pretty and wore glasses, inspired by nature's spectacle wrote short stories about the flowers. Married to a man too unidealistic for her, she came to Paris to tempt fortune and, attracted by Dumas' celebrity, she submitted to him a little gem entitled *Les Aventures d'un Camélia et d'un Volubilis* (The Adventures of a Camellia and a Convolvulus). Dumas received this muse from the provinces cordially and told her to come again; but in running through the manuscript he saw that the lady wrote *tentable* instead of *tentant* and *jurisdiction* instead of *erudition*—it was impossible to publish that!

When Clémence, filled with delight at "taking her place in literature," returned to the Maison d'Or, she was told the editor was out. But she was not discouraged. She felt the call to literature. "Her ideas were sprouting like the wings of a bird," and she had, thanks to God, read good writers—two volumes of Hugo, some poems by Lamartine, the books of Eugène Sue, Paul Féval, and Paul de Kock, without counting those of this Dumas who persisted in remaining invisible.

Soon Clémence and her eyeglasses were omnipresent at *The Musketeer*. She told her troubles to Michel and Rusconi. "Literary jealousies have made me a martyr," said she. "Talent isn't assisted and yet mine is wholly devoted to men and to women. . . . Then, too, I must

use my pen to live, because I want no illicit relations." She explained that her husband, who wanted to get rid of her, had sent a Don Juan from Vendôme to suborn her. Weak as she was, she had with difficulty repulsed these attempts, but her honor was at stake, and now she was going to claim damages from her seducer "because he had in a sense possessed her." "Ah! a woman in Paris who is engaged in the arts is far from being happy," concluded poor Clémence, "especially when she is alone." What would become of her if Dumas did not publish her *Aventures d'un Camélia et d'un Volubilis?*

Life was now very amusing at the Maison d'Or, for the staff gradually fell into the habit of returning there —it was a very jolly place, even though you might never receive a *sou!* Henri Rochefort passed himself off as the younger Dumas and enchanted Clémence with his gallantry. Another sent her a crown of convolvulus with verses:

Minuit! . . . Je pense à vous . . . Que le ciel me pardonne![1]

It was signed Emile de Girardin. Clémence rushed to the editor of *La Presse* who disabused her rather rudely. But she would not admit defeat, and returned to the charge, until Dumas, tired of the struggle, at last

[1] Midnight! . . . I think of you. . . . May heaven forgive me!

published *Le Volubilis*, revised by him and furnished with an introduction.

For Clémence this was a frightful blow—Dumas had changed all her ideas, suppressed the grace of the borage, the charm of the sunflower, and made a coxcomb of the lily! "I can not live, I can not go on," she wrote to him. "I demand that my story be printed as I gave it to you. . . . Leave to my borage all its charm and delicacy." Dumas, greatly amused, published her letters with witty comments, but Clémence had him enjoined by a sheriff's officer to publish her story intact. And so it really appeared on November 15 and 17, 1854, but its barbarisms and faults of style were underlined. Indignantly Clémence consulted a lawyer who made fun of her, another who talked jurisprudence, "as much as to say, Hebrew." No one would undertake her case; even the sheriff's officers now refused to act for her. Decidedly the whole human race had sold out to the editor of *The Musketeer*.

Then Clémence decided to strike a great blow for herself and she published *Le Soleil Alexandre Dumas* (The Sun, Alexander Dumas), in which she told her experiences. It was pitiful, grotesque, not malicious, the tale of this little provincial in her battle with the great Alexander "with his blue eyes, his three chins, and his sixty rays (the sixty volumes which he boasted he wrote every year), with this reviser, this huge

feeder who nurses himself in his columns (that is, in *The Musketeer*), who looks at himself and admires himself in this property of his." Once more the public had a good laugh, thanks to Alexander. If Clémence had been pretty and yielding, her story might have had a different ending.

To escape the confusion of the Maison d'Or, Alexander took refuge in an apartment he had rented in the rue d'Amsterdam. As he no longer had horses or carriages, but only some hens and a cock named Cæsar, who was later killed by the dog Catinat, surnamed Catiline after this murder, Alexander changed an old carriage-house in the rear of the court into an office where he could work quietly. When his task was done, he shone forth from his carriage-house upon Paris, took up his old habits, as gay as ever, a romantic in spite of all, criticizing relentlessly the conventional classics and their lack of melancholy, which coming from him, was really a choice bit.

The Princess Mathilde, daughter of King Jerome,[1] had become fond of him. She did not invite him because he was of noble birth or because he held a high place, but quite simply because he amused her. He was her puppet; and Alexander laid himself out for the princess,

[1] Napoleon's brother, former King of Westphalia.

which did not, however, prevent his treating the Napoleonic régime cavalierly. One evening at a reception at the Girardins, he said in announcing Lamartine: "His Majesty Lamartine, Gentlemen. He ranks at least as high as the Emperor."

His vivacity was not lessened by age, and he had a way of describing the Battle of Waterloo that stunned the old soldiers of 1815. He would arrange the army corps, and quote speeches. They would protest: "But it wasn't that way, Monsieur, we were there; and all that you've told us is absolutely new."

"Then that's because you saw nothing there," he replied and would start off again, narrating and arguing so well that the old warriors finally looked at one another and said, "After all, perhaps, it's he who is right."

When Queen Victoria came to France in 1855, she requested that *Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr* be played at Saint-Cloud. It was one of Dumas' plays which had enchanted her in London, and she declared herself even more satisfied at the second performance than at the first. Alexander's pride knew no bounds. "I know," said he, "what would have amused the queen even more than seeing my play—to see me in person; and to tell the truth, that would have amused me too. . . . So remarkable a woman, who will probably be the most famous of this century, should have met the greatest man in

France. It is a pity that she is going away without having seen what is best in our country. Alexander, king of the romantic world! Dumas the ignorant!" For he delighted to contrast himself with the famous chemist Dumas who was called Dumas the savant, saying, "Then I am Dumas the ignorant!" and he would roar with laughter.

Whatever he was, he was sympathetic. Even Delacroix, usually taciturn and disdainful, with his olive face congealed and yet with a curious quivering of the nostrils which made one think that he breathed the odor of corruption, even Delacroix cheered up when he saw "the terrible Dumas" approaching. Not that he had a special taste for his works—the disorderly rambling on, the lining up of phrases and of volumes without restraint, law, or sobriety, the mixture of comic and tragic, the inability to select and to stop at the right moment, and the lack of taste oppressed him. He put Dumas on the same plane as "poor Aurore" (George Sand)—they were two writers who did not work and abused their remarkable powers. . . . None the less, when he picked up one of his friend's books, he often became so absorbed that he forgot about his own work, he, the great, sincere worker!

Dumas came to interview him at his studio one midnight, with paper in hand, and asked him about his life and his way of looking at art and at color—he must

have this for *The Musketeer*. Delacroix let himself go, talking freely, but thinking all the while: "Here's a man whom I like very much but who isn't formed of the same elements as I, who treads on everything and is always distracted. God knows what he'll make of the answers that I've given him!" But what Dumas made of them was elevated and charming; he lent Delacroix the air of a hero of romance, the adventurous grace of a d'Artagnan of Art; and when, at a later visit, he invited his friend to dinner, Delacroix accepted, sure of enjoying a good time.

One day in May, 1855, however, Alexander arrived at Delacroix' studio with clouded brow. He said he was getting tired of writing night and day and never having a *sou*. "I am at the end, I'm leaving two novels half finished. I'm going away, I'm going to travel, and I shall see on my return if some Hercules has appeared to complete these two unfinished labors." He affected on all occasions such metaphors of strength—souvenir of his father—and felt persuaded that day that, like Ulysses, he was leaving a bow behind that no one could draw. Then, becoming gloomy again, he added that although he had two children, Alexander and Marie, his daughter by Bell Krebsamer, born in 1831, he was quite alone. Both of them minded their own affairs without troubling about their father. Life was not gay. . . .

Happily Delacroix was not unaware that Alexander was finding some consolation with a little actress, Isabelle Constant, whom he had known since her youth and whom he called "his dear daughter." He took her to the theater, occupied himself every day "with the essentials of her household," and overwhelmed her with affection that was not exactly paternal. Delacroix smiled—his friend was still this big gamin of a Dumas.

Alexander, however, did have reason to be depressed. He felt "symptoms of antipathy" in the air and suffered because he could no longer produce an effect on the crowd as in other days. When he followed the funeral procession of Madame de Girardin, he was made aware that people thought him changed and much older. He began to look quite African and his disorderly mop of hair, "his tropical jungle," was growing gray.

Attacks against him were constantly renewed, always alike. The editor of the *Courrier des Spectacles*, whom he had threatened with correction, replied with a jeering quatrain that was acclaimed by the minor press. A journalist made a statistical report of what had been published under Dumas' name and proved that he had quoted 36,000 persons, all bearing illustrious names, kings among writers, whose intimate friend he said he was. Lawsuits continued to multiply. In 1855 the publishers Lévy contended before the tribunal of the Seine that Lockroy who had composed a drama called

La Conscience with Dumas, had a right to part of the receipts—but they were overruled. In 1856 "the Maquet Affair" exploded and lasted two years. Maquet asked to be declared co-author of eighteen novels. The court acknowledged his collaboration, but did not allow him to share the profits, since his labors had been only preparatory. An open break followed—Maquet, who was now furious, never spoke of Dumas except as that everlasting rascal of a Dumas.

Dumas remained perfectly calm and gave out that he retained his old friendship for his former collaborator. "He remained kind and generous toward his brothers who were his enemies," exerted himself to assist even those who laughed at him, and was satisfied to say: "Eh, what a fine article I've furnished you!" But he would add philosophically, "There are only two things of which I haven't been accused—of being a spy and of turning over the pages like Henri III."

The Musketeer, like *Le Mois*, died of inanition on February 7, 1857, and Dumas decided that the moment had come to leave Paris whose atmosphere was so little favorable to him.

Thereupon his life of wandering romancer began once more. He disappeared for weeks at a time, and his son asked on the boulevards, "What's become of papa? He

might be at the South Pole without my knowing it." When Edmond About arrived in Marseilles in March, 1858, he felt himself suddenly lifted up by a magnificent, good-natured colossus. It was Dumas who was waiting at the station for "a woman he adored but whom he had replaced since the night before by a little ingénue, a perfect darling!" His Isabelle had already returned to the Land of Long Ago. He took About by the arm, led him to his hotel, where he concocted a delicious bouillabasse, and then to the theater where they were playing one of his plays, *Les Forestiers*. Its success was great, the orchestra came to serenade the author under the hotel balcony, Dumas addressed the crowd, and the party was prolonged until four o'clock in the morning.

When Alexander noticed that his young friend was half asleep, he had him go into his room, lighted two new candles, and said: "Go and rest, old man that you are! I who am only fifty-five years old, I'm going to write three feuilletons which must get off tomorrow, that's to say today, by post. If by chance I have a bit of time left, I shall patch together a little act whose scenario keeps running through my head." At daybreak About opened his eyes and saw Dumas shaving as he sang. On the table there were three large piles for three journals and the manuscript of a comedy, *L'Invitation à la Valse*.

Popular as he was at Marseilles, Alexander dreamed of more distant lands and unknown horizons. Beside the pleasure of the journeys, it meant getting new literary material and money. Then, too, Daniel Home, a spiritualist whom he had known in Paris, announced to him one day that he was about to marry the sister of a noble Russian, Count Kouchelef. He was starting off for Petersburg. Why shouldn't Dumas go along? To be present at a medium's wedding in Petersburg was an adventure too beautiful to miss. In three minutes he decided on the journey.

Under the guidance of the novelist Gregorovitch, Dumas visited the capital of all the Russias, the cells of the political prisoners, whose lot touched his heart, for in these prisons he again became Alexander the republican. After a tour of Finland, he saw Moscow, the Kremlin, the fair at Nijni-Novgorod, where he gathered material for a novel, and became aware of the charms of the Circassian maidens whose bodies, according to a seventeenth century traveler, are adorned "with lilies and with roses to make beauty perfect."

He traveled everywhere in the style of a potentate, entertained by princes, greeted with the title of General, because on his uniform of a Russian military man was spread the Order of Charles III of Spain and the peasants believed that Dumas was of high rank. In the Caucasus deputations came to meet him and deliv-

ered addresses beginning "Illustrious traveler," for these good people knew *Monte-Cristo.* Feasts were given in his honor, hunting parties, illuminations, Cossack festivals, extraordinary repasts during which he laid in a stock of recipes—oh wonderful schislik! those pieces of mutton cooked on live embers and savory! Among the Kalmucks he saw a race of 10,000 wild horses that crossed the Volga before his very eyes —a fantastic spectacle such as had never been seen and would never be seen again. . . . Then he got into his télègue or tarentasse again, covered leagues of country, stopped at post-stations which had as furniture nothing but a guitar against the wall, to find again, farther on, the splendor and the Pantagruelian life of the princes of the steppe.

Dumas was happy because Dumas once more held the center of the stage. He played the principal part and he liked his part in this exciting spectacle.

When he embarked at Poti on the Black Sea, to return to France, a young Circassian boy named Vasili was absolutely determined to follow him, but the authorities refused him a passport. Then Alexander gave Vasili a document recommending him to the care of packet-ship captains and to chancelleries, reading: "You can draw on me in Paris, No. 77, rue d'Amsterdam, for any expenses made in his behalf. Poti, February 13, 1859." Furnished with this talisman, Vasili

reached his destination, having spent 61 francs, 10 *sous* and without knowing one word of French. Dumas saw in this the undeniable proof of his European fame.

He astonished Paris by his travel lectures and people ran to hear him for he recounted his adventures in Rachel's manner, with "complete indifference to the effect to be produced and absolute confidence in the perfect simplicity of his diction." They even believed what he told, because he seemed to give proofs that he had really traveled to Russia and the Caucasus. This wasn't like Sinai.

"Sinai!" retorted Dumas. "The pasha of Egypt congratulated me on my book; if it were not for me, that country would be unknown to my contemporaries."

While away, Dumas had grown a new skin, as it were; his plays were received with favor again and the new playwrights who hoped to take possession of the stage for themselves noted the splendid receipts of *La Reine Margot*, the success of the obstructing Alexander. He was, in fact, always the master of popular drama; and poor Gautier, bending under his critical labors, sighed: "This job would still be endurable if one never had to render an account of anything but the plays of old Dumas."

For since the success of his son, Alexander had become old Dumas, Dumas the father, the forefather of the drama and the feuilleton, a forefather and an

old habit. He was called so without malice, but he did not quite appreciate this hoary, subordinate celebrity. He still felt devilishly young! He wanted still to be first in Rome or nothing. And as his purse was again full, he transformed himself into an explorer.

He had long dreamed of visiting the Orient—after Châteaubriand and Lamartine, Dumas!—and he had had constructed at Syra a little schooner with a bridge, manned by two sailors. But before sailing he was curious to see Garibaldi, the hero of the day, he who was to free Italy. He went to Tunis, and there in a little room of the Hôtel de l'Europe, he found himself before the famous soldier of fortune. Garibaldi was at that time a rather tall man, with a large forehead, a high-colored face, hair like that of a blond beast falling to his neck and "a serene, smiling mouth, framed by a reddish beard." Alexander was carried away by this courageous, resolute d'Artagnan, whose like one did not meet on the boulevards. Returning to Paris to recruit companions for his voyage, for he could not endure solitude, he persuaded Paul Parfait and Lockroy without much difficulty and on May 16, 1859, Captain Dumas, commander of the schooner *Emma*, embarked at Genoa.

There he learned that Garibaldi was marching on

Palermo and at once the Orient was forgotten. An epic poem was in the making. He felt he must take part as he had taken part in the Revolution of 1830 and the insurrection of 1832.

He sailed for Sicily, disembarked at Melazzo, entered Palermo in the train of Garibaldi, was saluted as an ambassador, was present at the proclamation of the dictator, and prepared to clear the straits. But arms and ammunition were needed by the army of emancipation; and Alexander put his fortune of 50,000 francs at Garibaldi's disposal, started off for Marseilles, purchased guns and cartridges and returned to Naples, by way of Salerno, where he was received to the ringing of bells, to await his hero.

On September 7, 1860, the latter made his entrance into the city, clad in a red shirt and sitting high up on a carriage; Alexander sat behind him, triumphant because the Bourbons of Naples, his father's tormentors, had taken flight. In recognition of his services Garibaldi appointed him director of Fine Arts—an office materially gratuitous—and assigned him as residence the little palace of Chiatamone, on the shore of the sea. And now you see Alexander changed into a scholar. He who had learned history well since his visit to the pope now thought of nothing less than bringing all antiquity to the light of day with the pickaxe, wanted to have savants come from Paris—quite like Napoleon

—and asked King Victor Emmanuel for a company of sappers to assist him. He no longer concerned himself with politics, but with Pompeii, the villa of Diomedes, the theater, and the forum. "Hic jacet felicitas" he said, pointing out the inscription carved on a house of the dead city. What joy it would be to liberate ruins, not peoples! And he laughed aloud with that fine, sonorous laugh which struck the ear, and "toward which people ran as if to a fair." For this gentle giant, "amiable in the original sense of the word," this naïf being in whom life overflowed, who could talk ten hours on end and be as fresh as at the first word, who was as violent as a volcano and had such wit that all his listeners felt witty too, this Dumas attracted the Neapolitans; and to keep this popularity which had become a necessity to him, Alexander founded a journal, *L'Independente*, the organ of M. Dumas in the service of United Italy.

But he could not remain in one place long; the wind blew, and carried him away. . . . One day Prince Lubomirski found him in an hotel in Turin, stretched out on a sofa, his open shirt showing his chest. Alexander's large face grew radiant; he recounted his adventures and his glories. "People maintain that I'm vain. They say that my son accuses me of sitting at the back of my carriage to make them think that I have a Negro servant. He's too good a son for that." Then, without any connection, he called, "Hey! Admiral!"

A clear voice answered, "Are you calling me?"

"Yes, come in."

"In two minutes, I'm dressing. . . ."

And then a street urchin appeared, dark, beardless, frisky, dressed like a sailor, and wearing a cap with gold braid. And Dumas explained that "The admiral is clearing up my blue paper, scratched over with my writing which I never correct. We are writing *The Memoirs of Garibaldi* together." Then, tenderly embracing the boy who leaned against his shoulder, he added, "Oh! *she* renders me all sorts of services!"

She was Emilie Cordier, or Admiral Emile, since 1859 the great passion of Dumas, who introduced her now as his son, again as his daughter, according to her dress. She had formerly been one of the *Emma's* crew, but since she had born a daughter, Micaëla, in Paris of whom Garibaldi was godfather, she no longer followed the sea and retained only her uniform. . . .

At Naples Dumas, as intimate adviser, obtruded on Garibaldi and as he presumed to divine the will of the people, he suddenly showed his good, frightened face in the hall of the Council of War, crying, *"Il popolo se riscalda!"* ("The people are growing cold!")

"Che se riscalda!" ("Let them grow cold!") answered the condottiere, annoyed. Dumas was himself to have a depressing experience of Neapolitan fickleness.

Still in a revolutionary mood, the people of Naples thought it wrong that a foreigner should occupy a position of honor among them and one evening organized a demonstration before the Chiatomone palace. Dumas was at table, laughing uproariously; he pricked his ears: "Is there, then, a demonstration this evening? Against whom? Against what? What more do they want? Haven't they their *Italia Una?*" But the demonstrators, preceded by a big drum, Chinese bells, and a flag with the colors of Italy, howled: *"Fuori straniero!* Out with the foreigner! Overboard with Dumas! Out with Dumas!"

In five minutes they were dispersed, but Alexander was wounded to the soul; with his head between his hands, he wept. "I was accustomed to the ingratitude of France, but I did not expect that of Italy. . . . " Then, shrugging his shoulders, he added "Bah! the people of Naples are like other peoples. To expect a nation not to be ungrateful is to ask wolves to be vegetarians! It's we who are simple to weary ourselves so for this sort of people. . . . It's labor lost, money wasted."

Not long after he was present at King Victor Emmanuel's entry into Naples. Not one Garibaldian, not a red shirt was among the troops in the welcoming lines. "They are less fortunate than Jeanne d'Arc's standard," remarked Alexander, "they had the pains but none of

the honor. Well, one must do the right thing and forget the reward."

In order to dispel his disenchantment, his friends arranged a big dinner for him, led him in triumph to Pompeii, and then to the chase in the park of Capodi-Monte; but Alexander remained morose and talked of sailing away on the *Emma* for Tripoli on the Barbary Coast.

Fate decided otherwise. In October, 1862, he received a letter from the Græco-Albanian Council in London asking him to do for Athens and Constantinople what he had accomplished for Palermo and Naples. It said God had reserved for Albania, the only warlike province of the Ottoman Empire, the task of putting an end to the dying power of the Turks. The Albanians invited as leader Alexander Dumas, who would thus take his place "in the Pantheon of contemporary humanity." The letter was signed by the Prince of Skandenberg, a descendant of the famous sixteenth century warrior.

A few days later, two letters came saying that the Prince of Skandenberg was not conspiring for the throne of Greece, but felt inclined to put it under Italian power. They counted on Dumas to begin negotiations with the Italian government, to establish a depot for materials of war in the peninsula, and to place a part of the Græco-Albanian loan. This done, "the King of Italy

could in turn place his valiant dynasty on the throne of Constantine, just as Dumas and Garibaldi had placed him on the throne of the Bourbons."

The letters began with "My dear Marquis" and exalted "the far-sightedness and experience both in politics and in history" of Garibaldi's friend. Alexander's head was turned. At last the opportunity had come for his genius to blossom, to turn events, and to enter into true glory. A soldier of fortune? Why not? He would emancipate Greece, strike the Turks unto death, and extend the benefits of civilization to these barbarous provinces.

He did not wish to go too far at first but offered his schooner at once to the Prince of Skandenberg. His Highness thanked the dear Marquis, and as one courtesy was deserving of another, offered him the title of "General in charge of the Superintendence of Military Depots in our Christian Army of the Orient." "Will you grant me the pleasure of allowing me to sign your commission?" graciously wrote His Highness in conclusion.

As Alexander did not care to accept the rank of general for fear of caricaturing his father's career, the prince called his attention to the fact that he was a poet and that "the sword and the pen are sisters." But the prince respected his scruples and begged him only to choose "the branch which he wished to enter—the civil

or the military." Dumas ended by accepting the duties while refusing the rank, and the prince asked him to send information about the state of the public mind at Naples. It was necessary to proceed quickly, for with the council ready and the general staff complete, they awaited only the right moment to proceed to Durazzo. The letter this time bore a beautiful stamp with an escutcheon and the inscription: "Higher Command of the Christian Army of the Orient."

Dumas set to work on a report to the prince on the state of mind of the Neapolitans. "The council must not send a single pistol without the authorization of the Italian government nor before I have gone to Turin to request this authorization." Meanwhile, he gave the price of the arms that he had bought for Garibaldi: Lefaucheuz or Devismes, of the best quality, at 80 francs, with 100 cartridges. Arming the schooner, would cost a matter of 16,000 francs. And he signed himself: "Your Royal Highness' very humble and very obedient servant. February 8, 1863."

It was a grand undertaking! Garibaldi's lieutenant would now be lieutenant to the Prince of Skanden-berg, one of the greatest names in the history of Central Europe. Dumas, the novelist, Dumas the dramatist, would now be Dumas, the warrior and the emancipator. What a sensation there would be on the boulevards!

Then, one fine day, Signor Silvio Spaventa, chief of

police of Naples, sent for Alexander and told him that the pseudo-Prince of Skandenberg was a trickster, an intriguer born in Apulia in Cerignola or Canossa.

Dumas did not spread this painful story abroad. It was a terrible blow to him. Then Fate crossed him a second time for Admiral Emile, for whom he felt a special attachment, confessed a weakness of the flesh. Although he practiced an indulgent philosophy, he suffered. "I pardon you," he wrote to her, "because you had no intention of hurting me. An accident has occured in our life, that is all. This accident has not destroyed my love; I love you as much as ever; only I now love you as one loves something lost, something dead, a ghost."

Some time after, Victor Emmanuel's police picked a quarrel with him about his journal, *L'Independente*. It was the last straw. Disgusted with the Neapolitans, with dictators, and with heroes of other days, fallen from the heights of his dream, Dumas left Italy.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAST CONQUESTS OF ALEXANDER

He returned to Paris at one stretch. His son met him at the station and arranged to take the traveler of sixty-two years, who might well be worn out, to his own house. "No," said Dumas, "I want to see Gautier!" And although it was ten o'clock at night, he dragged his son to Neuilly.

In front of the house of the good Théo he made such a hullabaloo as only he knew how to make. A window opened.

"It's Dumas the father and Dumas the son!" he called.

"But we're all in bed!"

"Why, you lazy-bones! Am I in bed? Come, get along! Everybody get up."

Gautier himself came to open the door, in velvet trousers, a purple blouse, and slippers. The candles were lighted and everybody began to talk. Dumas, fresh from Italy, could not wait to embrace his old friend; he talked of old memories, of heroic days. . . . At four o'clock in the morning, Gautier, worn out with too

much laughing, decided to put his guests out. They went up the Avenue de Neuilly and down the Champs-Elysées; and when they had arrived at his son's place, Dumas said: "Alexander, my dear fellow, please tell me where there's a lamp in this house?"

"What do you want to do with a lamp?"

"I want to light it. I'm going to set to work."

Quite as he had been in Marseilles, so Dumas remained six years after in Paris. Weariness and age passed by without affecting him. Skandenberg and the Neapolitans were forgotten. They were poor playthings; he would find others.

He went to live at 112, rue de Richelieu, on the fifth floor, in a furnished apartment looking out on the boulevard, next door to the photographer Reutlinger; but for work he took a study in the editorial rooms of *Le Petit Journal* which had just been founded and had offices in the same building. The manager offered him the position of an editor who signed himself Timothée Trimm—for Dumas on a paper was always synomymous with fortune—but he refused. He did not like to be tied down, he preferred to be a free lance; and as he had received some money from Girardin for his novel, *La San Felice,* he rented the Villa Catinat, in the Avenue du Lac, at Enghien, for the summer of 1864.

The bohemian life began again; on a smaller scale, with less luxury and fewer servants, it was that of

Monte-Cristo over again. Before the door of his villa the carriages were lined up, bringing as before parasites whose host would pay the costs. If he were absent, the parasite would exclaim: "Dumas should really have let me know beforehand!" In spite of the Circassian Vasili who kept close watch over the household, the hungry ones among them attacked the buffet.

Alexander seemed to complain, but at bottom he could not get along without people of this sort to make a public for him; and when he came down from the second floor, where he had been working since six o'clock in the morning in a little billiard room turned into a library, he was glad enough to find the crowd made up of the actresses Desclée, Doche, Agar, Esther Guimont, the erstwhile beauty with the worn-out voice, Anne Deslions, and Olympe Audouard who had just come from the Mormons, "a charming woman with only one fault, that of always feeling under the weather when things were at their best"; the actors Lacressonière and Rouvière; the armorer Devismes, big Henri Monnier, and the editor Souverain on whom Dumas made the pun: "Mon souverain est un mauvais sujet qui m'achète et me vend" ("My sovereign is [a bad subject] a worthless fellow who buys me and sells me"). Then there were the unknown visitors, those whom he had seen only once and whom he lumped together in the general phrase, "My good fellow!"

Generous as in times past, he always had before him in a saucer some louis or five-franc pieces, according to his financial situation, and said to the borrower, "You see my whole fortune. I shall share it with you." And his practical sense was still as exquisite as ever. When he had ordered a pair of patent leather shoes and could not pay for them, he invited the shoemaker to lunch, gave him flowers for his wife, and fruit for his children; then the shoemaker returned and was again entertained; at the end of a year he had consumed the value of fifty louis and Dumas still owed him the bill. One day, to oblige a poor devil, he bought his watch for 300 francs, but as he had only 100 francs in his pocket, he said to him: "Come back for the rest in three or four days." As the saucer was empty at the time, Dumas signed a note for a month from date on which he paid the interest, then another note, and since he never could discharge the debt he lodged and boarded his creditor. In the end his watch cost him 3,000 francs.

There was always a frightful hubbub at the Villa. Alexander had just had a singer come from Italy, a dark woman, "attractive in spite of the fact that she was past thirty, who had fallen madly in love with him" and who amused him with her jargon. Fanny, called la Gordosa, the victim of a brutal husband—whether he was an actor at the Naples Opera or an Austrian baron no one exactly knew—wanted to be engaged at

the Italian Opera in Paris; and so the Villa Catinat was suddenly invaded by pianists and singers who ate voraciously before giving their lessons. Dumas, the most anti-musical person in the world—a melody to him seemed a noisy substitute for thought—did not know what to do, fled to his workroom "while they miowed in the drawing-room," or even went out to visit Girardin whose estate was near by, or the Princess Mathilde who lived at Saint-Gratien. "I am the prey of music," he would sigh when he came to them.

At the end of the summer he returned to Paris and settled at 70, rue Saint-Lazare, where la Gordosa ruled completely. She had reduced Alexander to slavery and was a jailer to his time. If a woman asked to speak to the master, she would exclaim in her jargon: "Oune femme! Dites louis que M. Doumas il est malade, qu'elle s'en aille!" ("A woman! Tell her that M. Doumas he is sick, and that she's to go away!") And when the visitor insisted, la Gordosa in a dressing-gown, looking like two black and white dumplings, rushed to the reception room, saying: "Dites, quoi voulez vous à Doumas! Je veux, vous entendez, que vous laissiez Doumas tranquille!" ("Tell me, what do you want with Doumas? I want you to let Doumas alone, do you understand!") She was good-natured, however, and was soon smoothed down. She received company lying down or seated on her commode, explaining "Je souis malade

comme oune chienne" ("I am as sick as a dog"). On the subject of morality she was relentless; and Alexander, now well tamed, carrying Fanny's little dog in his arm, confided to his friends: "She is a trifle odd, but she has a good heart."

The drawing-room at the rue Saint-Lazare was crowded with lutes, harps, violins, and trombones, all instruments of torture to Dumas. To make up to himself for these, he delighted in a painting representing the stars, the moon, the firmament, and above them an open hand. This astrological alphabet on his wall he often consulted with Madame Desbarolles, the clairvoyant, who used to come to the rue Saint-Lazare in a headgear of three-cornered poisonous-looking leaves, among which moved the heads of serpents made of rubber. The older he grew the more superstitious he became. He had his fortune told on all occasions, he carried a little horn on his watch chain to protect him against the evil eye, and in the street was mistrustful of those who "cast spells." At the same time, he cultivated his hypnotic powers and was much in demand as a magnetizer, from which he derived unexpected pleasure occasionally: "I had been visiting for several days at the Château of Lady X . . . and as I lay thinking, in my room, how much I should like to see her, I saw her enter, attracted by my suggestion. She seemed to be asleep. As a gentleman, I led her back to her room

three nights in succession, pointing out to her that everything has an end; but, my word! when she came for the fourth time, I did not lead her back."

He carefully concealed from la Gordosa his success in hypnotizing, but she still kept watch over him. One evening at the theater as she was opening the door of her box, she saw Alexander in compromising conversation with a lady. Her fury was unloosed in true Italian fashion, but this time her piquant accent failed to please Dumas. "Take away the madwoman," he cried. There followed a stormy scene at the rue Saint-Lazare. Alexander, in a fit of African rage, broke a heavy crystal decanter over his mistress' shoulders, accusing her of "playing duets" with her pianist. Fanny had an attack of hysterics and fainted. So Dumas paid for her jewels and her clothes—he had received a sum of money to indemnify him for the shipwreck of the *Emma* which he had rented to an explorer—and sent her back to Italy.

Freed from his mistress and her music, he let himself go. The circle in which he moved now was lower still —braggarts, worthless women, usurers, beggars, a whole world of freebooters swarmed around him, flattering his hobbies and his vanity, the more easily to rob him. It was a court of Miracles where he was enthroned as king of Bohemia.

Mathilde Shaw, daughter of the Orientalist Schoebel, who came to see him one morning, found him stretched in a low chair, half clothed and surrounded by three women, one leaning against the back of the chair, one on the arm of the chair, and the third curled up on the woollen carpet, all three less warmly dressed than Eve. The house of the sexagenarian was little more than a harem. Besides a titular mistress, there were usually three or four passing entertainers. The pasha very slowly descended to a sort of erotic disease. He repeated that woman was created only for love, that the true end of creation was the union of the sexes, boasted of having more than five hundred children all over the world, and of giving proof of his humanity by having several mistresses instead of one. He who had never written an obscene line, now composed them to amaze his sweethearts, and when they took offense, he said: "Do take this, baby, and treasure it. Don't read it if you don't want to. But all that comes from Papa Dumas will fetch a price one day." To multiply his conquests every means seemed good. He made himself ridiculous in red tights to charm an actress who had said she found nothing beautiful in *Faust* but Mephistopheles.

The censure of his son he feared, this Alexander II "who liked problems and ethical subjects"—a baroque taste certainly!—and when he received him, he hid his women in a closet and his usurers in the attic, for fear

of being scolded. But the younger Dumas rarely visited him. As a former roué now grown sober, he had a horror of this vulgar herd which surrounded his father, and the father sighed: "I no longer see Alexander except at funerals. Maybe now I shall only see him again at my own."

In spite of all this unbuttoned disorder so shocking to Delacroix, in spite of the childish pride which made him stand before a looking-glass and applaud his own gestures, he was still somehow sympathetic. His secretaries, and they all agree on this point, appreciated his sweetness, his unwearying kindness, "his radiation of ineffable goodness." It was a sight to see him carrying in the hollow of his hand young Micaëla, Emilie Cordier's baby daughter, a little weakly creature with waxen cheeks but with magnificent, intelligent eyes. He doted on this small monkey and was deeply distressed that "the silly little admiral" had prevented his acknowledging the child. So Alexander, the father, played being a grandfather.

Catherine Lebay, like the secretaries, preserved a sort of tender indulgence for Dumas. Thanks to her son, she was now living in a house at Neuilly in the rue d' Orléans; and when public rumor or the newspapers reported some new folly of the great Alexander, she would say: "Ah! how he always stays the same! Age, experience, life have taught him nothing." Seated in a big armchair of 1830, near the dark mahogany table where

Alexander, the supernumerary clerk, had written *Henri III*, she liked to talk, and she talked well, of the young people of the Romantic Age. She would show the torn coat that Dumas wore on the opening night of *Antony* and all but laughed in recounting the adventures of this *"enfant terrible."*

She had become reconciled with him and when she died in October, 1868, she had no rancor in her heart toward the little penman of the Carré des Italiens. She rests now in the ancient cemetery in the rue Victor Noir, in the 4th division, series 73, number 10. A stone reddened by the rains, almost level with the ground and protected by a zinc border, marks the place where is buried that simple linen shopkeeper who was a good woman.

One day an opportunity came to Alexander to set his life in order. His daughter Marie had married, in 1856, a country gentlemen of Châteauroux, Olinde Petel, but the marriage was not happy; Marie regained her freedom, entered the convent of Les Oiseaux and then that of the Assumption, where she devoted herself to painting, and then finally drifted back to her father. Her black eyes and thick lips gave her a rather pronounced Jewish look. On reception days she wore a crown of mistletoe, a tunic of white wool crossed over the breast and confined by a curved knife; and in this priestess' costume

she declaimed theosophical verses. Nevertheless she tried to establish a sort of order in her father's house. She did not have much success; and soon the two took up their quarters in opposite ends of the apartment on the Boulevard Malesherbes where Alexander had made his home since his rupture with la Gordosa.

In Paris no one any longer troubled much about the author of *The Three Musketeers*. He suffered from this neglect and tried this way and that of recalling his name to the public. In 1865, when the censorship had the happy idea of forbidding the performance of the *Mohicans de Paris*, a drama which he had concocted out of an interminable novel, he took up his pen of the great old days and wrote to Napoleon III—whom he now called privately the Gentleman of the Tuileries—a letter beginning thus: "Sire, There were in 1830 as there are still today three men at the head of French literature. These three men are Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and I." The good old song had its effect—the censorship was raised and the *Mohicans* was played.

Soon after a descendant of M. de Préfontaines accused Dumas of having travestied in *La Route de Varennes*, the rôle of his ancestor, who had opened his door to Marie-Antoinette as a fugitive, and not closed it, as the author maintained. A suit followed, Alexander was condemned to correct his book and readily agreed. The sensitiveness of titled persons did not surprise him,

he even sympathized with it. He had once before had a difference with the Marquis d'Epinay Saint-Luc, who had been indignant because a Saint-Luc appeared in *La Dame de Montsoreau* as one of Henri III's favorites. That one should be sensitive in matters of family honor Alexander could very well understand; he now affected signing himself A. D. Davy de la Pailleterie. Time had washed pale his republicanism. After meeting Prince Napoleon at the house of Princess Mathilde, he said to Pifteau, one of his secretaries: "I prefer a prince who addresses me as Monsieur to a workman who addresses me as Citizen."

But these gusts of aristocratic vanity did not satisfy him fully, and he had genuine partiality only for popular success. After the revival of *Hernani* in 1867, he seated himself in full view in a box and applauded with such enthusiasm that it gained him an ovation between the acts. For the first nights of his son's plays, he took even more trouble. Dressed in a frock coat, with a waistcoat of white piqué which emphasized the size of his body, he showed off in the center box of the balcony, with an enormous bouquet surrounded by white paper placed before him. Through the whole play he clapped his hands, laughed, recalled the actors, shouted "Bravo!" in the middle of long speeches, in short, "made the very devil of a noise." Then, when the name of the author was announced, he rose, bouquet in hand, bowed to

right and left, and blew kisses to the ladies as if he said, "You know, it's my son who wrote this play!"

He could not get over the fact that he no longer had a theater of his own. One day he asked the Emperor for money to establish a Théâtre Historique in place of the theater of the Prince Imperial which was only a kind of circus. "The theater, Sire, is the literature, I had better say, the public opinion of the people of the faubourgs!" When the money did not arrive, he undertook to erect a theater by popular subscription, and sent forth circulars explaining his contrivance—a precious contrivance by which the subscribers would be repaid by receiving their seats free—but only a few polytechnic students, admirers of *The Three Musketeers*, sent him their obolus.

Thereupon he fell back on the Grand Théâtre Parisien, a building for spectacles in the rue de Lyons under the arcades that support the railway of Vincennes. There, to the accompaniment of the rumbling of trains and locomotive whistles, *Les Forestiers* was played. The public did not flock there, the Grand Théâtre Parisien closed its doors, and the artists shivered on the sidewalks. Alexander, who could not bear the sight of wretchedness, advised his actors to form a company under the name of the "Troupe of M. Alexander Dumas," to play the provinces. He agreed to answer their first call for help by coming to stand by in person.

He kept his word and showed himself in the little suburban and provincial theaters, winning the success of a second-class Barnum. At Villers-Cotterets alone was there a first-class triumph. The foresters, heroes of the play, and the whole town, massed in front of the Hôtel du Dauphin, shouted in honor of their native son.

He was not satisfied. Glory in Paris alone impressed him, and as Paris remained silent, he went away again. Absence was to restore his reputation—"for him posterity began at the frontier."

Next he was to be seen at Florence concocting risotto, dancing casserole in his hand, and hurrahing with the rest when he heard of Italy's declaration of war against Austria. Then, suddenly, he reappeared in Paris. Frankfort had just been sacked by the Prussians—a terrible and magnificent drama. A burgomaster, emulating the citizens of Calais, hanged himself. . . . How could Alexander let such a subject escape? He needed a lucky long shot, for his purse was so flat that he could not pay a note for 220 francs. He seized the opportunity to send a prospectus to his readers in the capital, in the 89 departments of France, and even in the rest of the world, but no one responded. So, at the end of July, 1866, he departed for Frankfort.

The city had changed greatly since the day when,

with poor Nerval, he had tried to develop Germanic subjects. "It was bleeding under the Prussian heel." Alexander at once had his scenario planned—a young French painter who had all the qualities of d'Artagnan, gay, enterprising, and a gourmet, killed the Prussian general, the tormentor of Frankfort, at the end of the tale.

When he returned to Paris, there was trouble about publishing the novel which was to be called *La Terreur Prussienne*. Hollander, the manager of *La Situation*, a new journal which attacked Bismarck's system and Hohenzollern ambitions, asked him: "Are you for the Austrians or for the Prussians?" "For neither," answered Alexander. "In my opinion Prussia represents brutal force and Austria hereditary despotism." Finally the two settled and Alexander set to work. Never had a novel given him more trouble or more pleasure; and *La Terreur Prussienne* has a prophetic value; it is one of those plummets that old men drop into the future.

Old Dumas was getting serious. Suddenly the success of *La Terreur Prussienne* faltered; the journalists made fun of this old sultan who was using up his last dozen handkerchiefs, this amateur-cook "who held the handle of the fryingpan and turned over an omelet with the hand which had dethroned kings and created *Monte-Cristo.*"

Dumas took them at their word. If the public no

longer relished his novels and his theater-pieces—he had just met with another painful failure at the Odéon—he would serve it in his kitchen. Here, thank God, he was competent; the carp matelote which he prepared himself was a dish fit for kings. In earlier days Véron's cook, a *cordon bleu,* suspecting that Alexander might become a dangerous rival, set out to depreciate him. "It's with his carp as with his novels," she said. "Others make them and he gives them his name. I've seen through him, he's only a big devil of a vain fellow!" Dumas forthwith invited Véron to dine and asked him to send a witness to stand by the stove; he did the trick himself, the matelote was perfect, and the cook admitted she had lost.

From then on he rose steadily. European and African recipes held no secrets from him. He took as much pride in them as in his plays. He knew how "to make Algerian méchoui," rabbit cooked in the skin according to the rule of the inn of la Cloche at Compiègne, to prepare macaroni in the way of the steward of Madame de Ristori, the tragedienne, octopus (famous since *The Toilers of the Sea*) fried or au gratin. . . . When he had money he gave banquets worthy of Brillat-Savarin, and he entertained magnificently at the Reservoirs at Versailles the Negro actor, Ira Aldridge, who had just enjoyed an enormous success in the rôle of Othello, the only one he could play. In short, Dumas made use

of his old passion for the kitchen as a new road to popularity.

"Who tells us," he wrote; "that Carême will not live longer than Horace, and Vatel, who cut his throat, than Lucan, who opened his veins? . . . I see with pleasure that my culinary reputation is increasing and promises soon to efface my literary reputation. God be praised! I shall yet have an honorable estate and leave to my children, not books from which they can inherit only for fifteen or twenty years, but casseroles or pots to keep them through eternity."

This was not all pleasantry—his name resounded through the provinces. One day the poet Louis Bouilhet met coming to visit him, at Mantes, several friends, among them Dumas, bearer of a fat pullet stuffed with truffles, and he wrote to Gustave Flaubert: "Dumas embraces me in the street! Do you realize the beauty of that? I have spoken to him only once before at M. Blanche! He calls me, 'Dear friend! dear confrère!' Everybody rushes to the doors to see Dumas, without a hat, his hair standing out. It is a real event, a revolution! He is recognized, a queue forms at the hotel entrance where I order luncheon for my guests. We take an absinthe in the café and then go to the kitchen. Dumas, in shirtsleeves, puts his finger in the pie, makes a dream of an omelet, roasts the chicken at the end of a cord (they are keeping the nail here, reverently),

cuts an onion, stirs the kettles, throws twenty francs to the scullery-servants and seizes the grateful cook around the waist. It's immense! What youthfulness! He was as happy as a boy on his holiday. And what a mouth! . . . I have rarely seen any one eat with such zest. He drinks less. We embraced each other several times. Excepting him and me, everybody was tipsy. What's best of all is that the mistress of the hotel sold, at a very high price, the remains of the omelet and of the chicken. A good manager! One thing not to be denied and which I didn't before believe so genuine is the immense popularity of this jolly fellow."

These fine days had sad tomorrows, and the jolly Alexander saw everything collapse. After *Les Nouvelles,* a daily, he tried to recapture success by reviving *The Musketeer,* but this ceased publication about the middle of 1867. He would not give up and in February, 1868, founded the *d'Artagnan,* to appear three times a week, but the name no longer stirred the public, and *d'Artagnan* languished. The publisher Lévy, to whom Dumas had sold his work, reduced his annual credit from 10,000 to 4,000 francs, and his debts increased. "I have made four or five millions," said he, "I should have an income of 100,000 francs and instead I have 200,000 francs of debts." To explain and excuse his distress, he added: "I have a great deal of simplicity which many people call self-love. . . . So many people

have taken my new clothes, and haven't even left me my old ones. . . . The Plutarch who will write my life will not fail to say that I was a basket with holes in its bottom, forgetting of course to mention that it wasn't always I who made the holes." [1]

His best friends were dead—Delacroix, the man who told him the truth; Méry, the most faithful of all; that old traitor of a Roger Beauvoir, who had seen his last hour approach while writing verses:

Je demeure seul dans ma chambre.
Le grésil tinte à mes carreaux;
Je me chauffe avec mes journeaux.
C'était avril—je suis décembre.[2]

One by one these familiar faces whom he had always found on returning from his journeys, each of whom he loved as a household god, vanished from the scene. Dumas, too, felt that it was December. He, too, began to meditate his latter end.

But his health remained excellent, his appetite regular, and hopelessness was not a mood that suited him. At the Exposition of 1867, attending a performance of *The Pirates of the Savana* at the Théâtre de la Gaîté,

[1] "A basket with holes in it" is a figurative phrase applied to incorrigible spendthrifts.

[2] I dwell alone in my chamber.
The sleet clings to my window panes;
I warm myself with my journals.
It was April—and I am December.

he noticed an American rider, a pretty girl with brilliant eyes and brow crowned with curly hair, who was carried off the scene by a galloping steed, like Mazeppa. When Dumas was leaving, the pretty girl ran up to him, threw herself upon his neck, and kissed him. She had known of him for a long time, had read his books in translation and said to herself, "When I go to Europe, I shall be the lover of this extraordinary man."

Dumas, like a real prince, accepted her homage, and Adah Isaacs Menken became the favorite. It was reported that she had been in turn the legal wife of a millionaire, a king's mistress, the general of a republic, and a journalist. She was really a Portuguese Jewess born in America, the mistress of a boxer who left her perfectly free. Alexander persisted in thinking her of a great family and regretted that he did not know enough English to utter all the pretty thoughts he had about this charming person who lighted up his later years.

He never left her, took her to Dives on a journey "to mother Le Rémois," and had himself photographed with her. . . . That was where he blundered. The show-cases of the stationers blossomed at once with a series of photographs adorned with a cartouche which read, "Adah Menken, Alexander Dumas," showing the rider in her tights, tenderly leaning against the celebrated author in his shirt sleeves. The loungers were

amused. Instead of letting the scandal die of itself, Dumas brought a suit against the photographer Liébert, and the public laughed again. A few months later Adah Menken fell from her horse and died at Bougival of an attack of peritonitis. She was thirty-three years old.

She was Alexander's last conquest. Ever after he had to be satisfied with skirmishes and accepted the fact that he must now lead a quasi-bourgeois life, seasoned only by the memories of other years. His popularity shrank to the confines of his district; there he was still king, and, as in the glorious days of Monte-Cristo, any man whom you met in the street would point out the house of M. Dumas, No. 107, on the Boulevard Malesherbes.

It was an ordinary house. The concierge would always say, "M. Dumas is in the country since yesterday." But if you had the right password, you could go up to the fourth floor where one of three persons would open the door: Armande, a chamber-maid with bright eyes; or Tomaso, an Italian whom Alexander had brought with him from Florence and who solemnly spoke of Mozieu Doumas, just like la Gordosa; or Humbert, the cook, the confidential servant, who knew how to prevent annoying encounters and who advanced money when some poor wretch came to borrow or when Monsieur could not squeeze through to the end of the month.

The antechamber was decorated with Delacroix's sketch, *King Roderick,* a souvenir of the carnival of 1833, which, by extraordinary chance, had escaped the auction rooms. You entered the library, a tiny room where were found some curiosities that marked the stages of Dumas' life. There was a letter from Gaillardet, who had fought a duel with Alexander about *La Tour de Nesle,* who now wrote: "Here is an old souvenir which is even more completely effaced from my heart than from my memory." A small coffer of black velvet with a silver cross contained the blood-stained napkin which had been around the Duke of Orléans' head. . . .

From the library you passed into the dining-room, more exactly "the throne-room," furnished in old oak, with credences covered with rare crystals, immense Bohemian glasses, exotic bottles, and pottery "dissolute in form and color," all brought back haphazardly from Italy, Algeria, Austria, or Russia.. . . The bedroom was consecrated to family grandeur. Over the bed there was the portrait of General Dumas, his right hand on the barrel of his gun, his left on a hunting-dog; facing him was hung the portrait of the younger Dumas by Horace Vernet.

Through the door you heard the voice of the master of the house, a tired voice, "like a worn hautboy from which one might draw the sounds of a flute." Then you

saw him in person, seated in an armchair, before his table littered with many-colored sheets of paper, in a check shirt and stocking-pantaloons, his feet in red Turkish slippers. His large face with its strongly developed jaw has grown paler; his hair, his scanty mustache, and his small beard are white; his belly has become enormous; but his eyes still shine with the same light of kindness. He remains generous to the point of keeping a poor fellow whose sole work consists in going every day to see what the temperature is by the thermometer of Chevalier on the Pont-Neuf. "That's of great importance for theater receipts!" Dumas pronounces sententiously. And miracle unheard of!—he has beguiled his enemies, the bailiffs. To one of them who came to ask him for a theater ticket, he gave two with such grace that the bailiff went out murmuring, "There's a man that I could never arrest!"

Sometimes you might find kneeling at the feet of the colossus, a little, shy creature, his secretary, who was called now Saturine, now Aventurine, after a certain stone of changing tones, and now Valentine, in memory of the niece of the author of the *Meditations*. She was a countrywoman of Vermandois who, loving literature and dreaming of Paris, had sent Dumas a specimen of her handwriting. He had engaged her at once and Saturine-Valentine wrote steadily to his dictation. He loved her purely, and when chatting with her or dis-

cussing the subject of some play with the feverish inspiration that was always fresh in him, he would pass his hand through the young girl's hair or cram bonbons into her mouth until he almost choked her.

His old age shone still with some new rays of glory. Marseilles offered to quarter the coat-of-arms of the Davy de la Pailleterie family on the Château d'If; the revival of *Antony* was received with applause, and Alexander, seated in a front box, received a tremendous bouquet from Mademoiselle Duverger who gracefully handed it to him over the footlights. All the same, he got away with his coat intact this time.

He made a new contract with his editor, 1,000 francs per volume and 10 per cent of the receipts; and one of his fanatical admirers, Leclère, busied himself with having his plays performed. But work became difficult for him; he began a novel, lost himself in it, and did not succeed in finishing it. Ah! if Maquet had been there! But Maquet, a practical man, managed his little boat alone and increased his substance while Alexander squandered his. "There would be forty fine stories more," sighed Dumas, "if the best, the firmest, and the most productive friendship that ever existed, had not been broken by the tittle-tattle of false friends."

He did not give up appearing in public and he loved to be greeted in the street. When an employee of the tax department stopped his cab, he exclaimed, "Don't

you know who I am, then? Yet there aren't two men in the world who have a head like this!"

"By heaven," spoke up another employee, "I recognize you, because I've seen your picture in a shop. You are M. Alexander Dumas!"

"Now you're an intelligent fellow and I shall testify to this on a piece of paper. What is your name?" And, tearing a page from his notebook, Alexander wrote: "I certify that so and so is not an imbecile."

He needed glory around him; and one fine day he persuaded himself that his daughter, Marie Petel, the theosophist, was magnificently gifted as a writer. As her first novel had just appeared, he spoke of it to everybody. One day he met Littré, and pressing his hand effusively, he overwhelmed the simple savant with a flow of words. Then he said, suddenly, "But you're not saying a word to me, my dear fellow, about the literary event which is the talk of all Paris!"

"What is that?" Littré asked innocently.

The storm burst, as suddenly as in the tropics. "It's an insult to my daughter to ignore her first book!" And, turning his back on Littré, he went off, gesticulating wildly and exclaiming, "Abominable! It's abominable!" For indeed could one of his blood be other than a genius?

His megalomania was with him everywhere. He gave addresses at the maritime exposition at Havre on his

journeys to Russia and to the Caucasus, and then went to breathe the mountain air at Pau. It was there, before the perron of an hotel, that young François Coppée, "so attractive with his golden countenance, his blue eyes, and very carefully dressed," came for the first time into the presence of the great Alexander.

"Embrace me, man of talent!" said the latter, opening his arms wide, and Coppée replied with infinite presence of mind: "I do not dare, man of genius!"

Words like these were to Alexander a draught of happiness.

CHAPTER XII

THE DEATH OF PORTHOS

To live like the middle class now that he was old, to count so niggardly the pleasures that remained to him under the sun—Dumas did not succeed in this. He was too used to a bohemian life to break his habits in a day. When the parasites heard that he had got money, there was a rush to the Boulevard Malesherbes; "the farceplayers" intended to be supported to the end.

One evening Mathilde Shaw found Alexander lying in his large, low bed; he was rather ill, yet felt that he ought to go to a reception at some ambassador's. There was no one in the house; not a shirt in the closet; he must buy one. "Look in the secretary," he said to Mathilde who carried the drawer to the bed; but "two greedy little hands" had already ransacked his poor stock. "But I must have a shirt!" Alexander kept repeating. It was eight o'clock; fortunately one shop still was open, but shirts of Dumas' measure were not easy to find. Mathilde was shown one with a blue ground on which little red devils sat astride the grimacing damned whom they pitchforked into yellow blotches

that represented flames; in despair, she bought it. . . . Alexander was spellbound when he saw it. He gave the roar of a wild beast, stamped his feet, trampled on the devilish shirt, and then stopped abruptly, saying, "I shall go just the same!" He ironed out his shirt, and slipped on his coat—across the opening of the waistcoat the devils continued their infernal ride. He knotted his red cravat, and went to the ambassador. The latter thought the shirt an original innovation. "It's hardly to be believed," Dumas recounted, "but I had a genuine success!"

He had no more of them in future. A drama made from his novel, *Les Blancs et les Bleus,* was to be played at the Châtelet theater; but he was tired, fell asleep while listening to the actor Taillade who had come to speak to him about his part. The criticism on it was rough—a military drama that ended as a circus piece. He remained at home. He had lived so much, written so much, seen so much without ever turning back to his thoughts that he might well, at last, ruminate a little and quietly reflect. His books kept him from being lonely. "Each page," he said one day, "recalls to me a day that has gone by. I am like one of those trees with thick foliage full of birds that are silent at noon but that wake toward the end of the day. At night-fall they will fill my old age with the flapping of wings and with songs."

In these words there is a certain twilight poetry. He was living his life again in his work, judged himself for the first time without complacency, amused himself, and bored himself with what he had written long ago. His son finding him absorbed in a book, said to him: "What are you reading there?"

"*The Musketeers.* I always promised myself to read it when I grew old to see for myself what it is worth."

"Well, and where are you in it?"

"At the end."

"What do you think of it?"

"It's good."

Some time after the incident was repeated, only this time *Monte-Cristo* was in question.

"And what do you think of it?" asked the younger Dumas.

"Pooh! not so good as *The Musketeers.*"

Sometimes he tried to act like a young man again, but he failed. Depression and gloom were upon him and he kept repeating: *"Tout passe, tout lasse, tout casse!"* Yet he wanted to live and took unusual precautions. He no longer worked at night. He stayed in bed in the morning. When Tomaso remarked, "Ah, Mozieu, you are not so early as you used to be!" he answered, "That's because I want to live, Tomaso, and I couldn't do that much longer if I got up every day at four o'clock." His appetite diminished. "It's tiresome

to eat only because you're hungry," he sighed, "because at once you're no longer hungry." These symptoms of decline distressed him; he anxiously consulted Doctor Déclat to find out if this were serious; and, uneasy, foreseeing the worst, he wrote to Mathilde Shaw, "I believe firmly that the end of your friend is not far off."

Then suddenly, the jolly fellow Dumas came to the surface again—after all, he was only sixty-seven years old and might still expect many good days; and he set off in his lightest mood to the Comédie-Française where *Mlle. de Belle Isle* was being played, whistled in the lobby, and addressed the usher on duty like an old crony. . . .

When he learned of Lamartine's death in 1869, he devoted to him who had never been his intimate friend but whose constant admirer he had always remained, a very warm article, in no wise imaginative—an article like the one he had written twenty years before on Dorval. He hoped in this way to lead the sympathy of the masses back to this greatest poet of the nineteenth century, this aristocrat who died almost in misery. To fall from the heights of glory to oblivion —Dumas could well understand that sorrow.

After this act of fidelity to a writer of his generation, he fell out of public notice. Now he lived from day to

day, borrowing from editors and his dramatic agent, pawning valuable objects at the Mont-de-Piété, and when Vasili no longer knew how to pay the tradesmen, sending a secretary to his son.

At the beginning of the summer of 1869, Doctor Piorry advised him to go to the country at Roscoff; he meekly obeyed. "The cards of his imagination were in confusion, he played at random," suspended between reality and dreams; and if he still smiled at women, he no longer said anything to them. Sometimes he tried to work, to take up a feuilleton again, but he lacked the power and the spirit to continue. Then, like a child, he cried about himself.

George Sand, who saw him in October, 1869, noticed that he could scarcely walk. He spent the winter in Paris, then he was sent to the South; he remained gentle and smiling, and grew weaker without active suffering. In July, 1870, he returned to the Boulevard Malesherbes; and when war was declared, his son decided to take him with him to his villa at Puys, near Dieppe.

There a wooded dale opened on the sea beyond the faubourg du Pollet, with a beach of pebbles and sand which George Sand had discovered in the course of her solitary walks. The house was a little like a railway station. "When the country is more populated," said the younger Dumas, "the travelers will come here to buy

their tickets." It was surrounded by a cluster of trees and grassy hillocks.

When he arrived at the end of August, Alexander said to his son: "My boy, I have come to your house to die." He was put on the ground floor in the finest room, furnished and panelled with polished pitchpine, with windows giving on the sea. The prodigal father had come to find refuge with his own and for the first time since his early days in Villers-Cotterets long ago, he lived with his family—his daughter Marie, his son, and his grandchildren, Colette and Jeannine, were around him. When the weather was fine, he was taken to the beach and there he remained for hours, seated in an armchair, watching in silence—he, the great talker—the Ocean at play. When he was asked how he was feeling, he answered with a smile, "Very well."

And his health did, in fact, seem better. This old convict at hard labor was stopping for a moment, and peacefully enjoyed feeling himself free, pardoned, and in contact with "that great nature that had done so much for him and that alone could restore him"; he rested and wandered no more. "Minds like his," his son, who took care of him with attentive devotion, wrote at the time, "do not relapse into second childhood; they do not return to the past, they look forward into the future; and when they are silent or speak a language that we

no longer understand, it is because they are contemplating infinity."

But if any one asked Dumas: "Well, do you want to set to work again?" he shook his head and answered: "There's no danger of my returning to that again. I am too happy this way!" and he started a game of dominos with his two granddaughters.

In October the bad weather began; fog and rain invaded the valley, and Dumas no longer left his room. He went from his bed to his chair, and through his window watched the pale autumn sun which made sea and sky melt into each other at the horizon. As news of the war was carefully concealed from him, he remained calm and benevolent. Never was there a more amenable old man. But he still had two preoccupations. This man who had never counted anything, now feared to be without money and tried to justify himself for having dissipated his fortune. "People say that I have been wasteful," he said to his son. "There's no truth in it. I came to Paris with two louis in my pocket; go and look in my waistcoat, and you will find those two louis." This fear of being without a *sou* gradually became an obsession and those around him took care to fill his table-drawer with money. "Alexander, I have nothing any more," he would say. "Yes, you have. Just open your drawer."

His other preoccupation was more painful and caused

him more anguish. He had just re-read some of his books and he asked himself if he had not wasted his time, dissipated his genius, and uselessly expended a formidable amount of labor. What had formerly offended Delacroix, the want of selection, the defects of taste—Alexander could still hear Beauvoir pronounce, "Taste is the white necktie of style"—perhaps offended him now. Had he produced so much to leave nothing behind, to be stranded here on this beach, overwhelmed and crushed like Porthos under his rock?

He returned to the subject incessantly. "It seems to me," he said, "that I am at the top of a monument which trembles as if its foundations were placed on sand." One morning—it was December 4, 1870—his son found him deeply absorbed. "Of what are you thinking?" he asked.

"It's too serious for you."

"Why?"

"You always laugh at things."

But his son was insistent. Then, turning on him his big eyes, very softly and in the tone of a child pleading with its mother, old Dumas asked: "Tell me, Alexander, on your soul and conscience, do you believe that anything of mine will live?"

"Never fear. . . . " and at great length and sincerely, too, the younger Dumas explained his idea on the subject. As he went on, the face of the old man lighted up;

he seemed very happy; then he pressed "his boy's" hand and kissed him. There was no further question between them about the judgment of posterity.

The next day Dumas was dying. When the priest who gave him the sacraments called him by name, he moved his eyelids but did not reply; and that evening, at ten o'clock, he died without a shock, without pain, without even knowing it.

That very evening a German detachment took possession of Dieppe. For the first time Dumas was an egotist—he had disappeared before the disaster of 1870.

He was buried temporarily in the little cemetery of Neuville; then, when the enemy had evacuated Villers-Cotterets, his body was taken there. The memory of the author of *La Terreur Prussienne* could not be fittingly celebrated until the departure of the invaders, and the ceremony on April 16, 1872, "was less an occasion for mourning than a fête, less an interment than a resurrection." He would have liked that.

Now the great hunter of adventures, the great traveler through history and the world rests in the cemetery of his native town, beside his father and his mother.

To put Dumas into a literary category, to enclose him in a frame, is an academic task that seems almost absurd. "This violator of rules who proved that the

rule was wrong, this man of pleasure who could serve as a model to laboring men" does not satisfy the compilers of literary textbooks. They pretty much exclude him from their manuals. This colossus, this Great Fool laughingly turns the accepted categories upside down and breaks through the frame.

Michelet, who was peculiarly qualified to understand him, said of him: "A man? No, he is an element like an unextinguishable volcano or a mighty American river. Where would he not have gone without that orgy of improvisation which he has kept up since 1827?" And it is the truth. Where others reflected, selected, and reserved their powers, he built with all his might, "squandered his glory in fireworks, his genius in getting money, and his money everywhere," and kept nothing in reserve.

To use the formula of physicians, he had the idiosyncrasy of character to be what he was without being conscious of it. He fell, wholly new and robust, into the midst of a society that was just recovering after the blood-lettings of the Empire. Ignorant of almost everything but ready for everything as well, he suddenly forced himself to the front, and from this point of view, the story of his life is the most marvelous of his romances.

How can one hold fast this figure which changes like the sky and reflects a thousand images? The critics

have reproached him with his disordered manner, and those who are conscientious hunt out epithets to fit him: "Superstitious in thought, religious in speech, a liar in his quality of poet, a despot in love, vain as a woman, a vagabond in body and mind, poor in wisdom and experience, a Don Juan by night, an Alcibiades by day. . . . " The portrait is inadequate. Our sympathy —and he gains our sympathy perforce—can not keep up with him—not in the détours of his thought which remains simple and direct, but in the freedom of his humor and his fantasy.

He proclaimed himself a popularizer, an entertainer, and he was sincere in this; but this entertainer who had, besides, "studied by himself more than three convents of Benedictines," had clear vision; he foretold the republic in 1832 and the war in 1867, as an animal feels the changes of the weather or the coming of a storm. He was, indeed, "a human animal a prey to genius," as Blaze de Bury described him.

His improvidence has become proverbial. He who said, "My minutes are as precious as gold. When I put on my shoes, it costs me 500 francs," had not saved enough to buy the house of his birth in Villers-Cotterets. Where would he have taken the time? A journalist on *The Musketeer*, trying to sum up his life, wrote: "During half a century Europe swore by him; the two Americas sent fleets of packet-boats to fetch

his novels; his dramas were played in Egypt to delight the old age of Méhémet-Ali, the great pasha; his writings have been read in Chandernagor and in Tobolsk. . . . With his hand he has blackened mountains of paper, he has had a hundred theatrical pieces performed, and published a thousand volumes. . . . He became a soldier in order to take part in street fights, he has commanded a legion, he has taken part in twenty duels, fought as many lawsuits, chartered ships, and distributed pensions from his private purse. He has danced, hunted, loved, fished, hypnotized, cooked, made ten millions, and spent much more."

He needed this furious activity, this lack of continuity of purpose to renew himself; and George Sand, who prided herself on writing only books that were as "simple as saying Good day" explained very clearly to the younger Dumas his father's ways of working. A man who supports a whole world of events, of heroes, of traitors, of magicians, and adventures, a man who is drama in person, would be destroyed by simple tastes; he needed the excesses of life to keep glowing incessantly an enormous fire of life in himself and that is why "father Dumas owed the abundance of his powers only to the lavish expenditure he made of them."

A work composed in this fashion leaves a considerable loss—smaller however, than one might suppose.

Abroad Dumas' books, forgotten in France, are still sold; but the scribblers, the literary bunglers, the Jacquot cliques of all periods have pretended to see no more than this deficit—childishness, bad taste, prolixity, the exploitation of the invention of others. When unkind talk of this sort was reported to the younger Dumas, he replied with this forceful metaphor: "My father is a river. Any one can befoul a river."

His critics have passed, his popularity remains. In days gone by Victor Hugo wrote to Dumas with the stoicism of an exile:

Tu rentras dans ton œuvre éclatante, innombrable,
Multiple, éblouissante, benreuse, où le jour luit;
Et moi dans l'unité sinistre de la nuit . . .[1]

Having watched companions and rivals disappear, one by one, Hugo alone stood on the horizon, he alone remained adorned with a halo of light, but he did not modify his judgment of his fellow. He wrote: "No one's popularity in this century has exceeded that of Alexander Dumas. His successes are more than successes, they are triumphs. They are like the flourish of a trumpet. . . . What he has sowed is the French idea."

And it is true that the masses continue to follow Dumas. He does not grow old, he does not grow old-

[1] You will resume your work, brilliant, innumerable,
Various, splendid, happy, where day shines bright;
And I in the dark, dread harmony of night . . .

fashioned, because he has the freshness of nature which always renews itself, and as time passes, unsuspected qualities are discovered in him. Stevenson, who was very exacting about his own work and very sensitive in the matter of literary composition, declared, "I adore Dumas and I adore Shakespeare;" but he preferred *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* to *Richard III*, saying, "It is better made in its own genre"; and this eulogy would have been after Alexander's heart.

Heine called the French, and especially the Parisians, God's own comedians. Dumas is one of these players and one of the greatest. He plays for children and shows them astonishing pictures; he even regretted one day that he had not the leisure to become the Daniel DeFoe of France. He plays for men of all nations, and Méry was right in saying: "If somewhere there exists another Robinson Crusoe on a desert isle, believe me, this recluse is engaged at this moment in reading *The Three Musketeers* in the shade of his parasol made of a parrot's feathers." He plays for the defeated, and Napoleon III, while a captive at Wilhelmshöhe, had Dumas' romances read to him by General Reille. He plays for those who are suffering, and the patients in the hospitals grow well or die with one of his books under their pillows.

Posterity is not ungrateful to him. He fills an enormous place, like that "which Homer's heroes occupied

on the field of battle." An American newspaper that arranged a list of the famous men of the nineteenth century put his name by the side of Napoleon's. Figures have an eloquence all their own. From 1870 to 1884, 2,845,000 volumes by Dumas and 80,000,000 subscription-parts were sold, 600 of his works were reprinted by various journals, without counting the countries which had no copyright arrangement with France, and so pirated and spread them in many tongues. His favor has not waned since then, and, as Edmond About said, if all the readers of *The Three Musketeers* and *Monte-Cristo* assessed themselves one centime each, the statue of Dumas would be of solid gold.

The dream of his old age has come to pass. A few years before his death he regretted that he had neglected himself in his narrative, that he had presented himself inadequately to his readers, as if d'Artagnan, Monte-Cristo, Chicot, and ever so many others were not always Dumas! He wanted, he said, "to become a living being, palpable, and mingling in the lives of those whose hours he filled, in short, something like a friend."

Now, when you cross the threshold of a million houses, he is settled at the hearth and has become one of the family. He is father Dumas, a good giant who is not pedantic, nor involved, nor complicated—a beneficent genius, harmless and without baseness, who in

all of his bohemian life has never cost his country a drop of blood.

The younger Dumas tells us that one evening, coming unexpectedly on his father, he saw that his face was distorted and that his eyes were red.

"You have been crying. What is the matter?" he asked.

"A great sorrow. Porthos is dead. I have just killed him. I couldn't help crying over him. Poor Porthos!"

When one has to kill father Dumas, one feels a little of this same sorrow.

NOTE

Dumas has told the story of his life, in delightful if untrustworthy fashion, in his *Mémoires* (which carry events to about 1833), his *Causeries*, his *Souvenirs Dramatiques*, his *Impressions de Voyage*, *L'Histoire de mes Bêtes*, and in several of his novels: *Le Testament de M. Chauvelin*, *La Femme au Collier de Velours*, *Les Mille et un Fantômes*, *Les Morts Vont Vite*. . . .

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